



IL NOSTRO MANIFESTO

NUOVA EGEMONIA

OUR MANIFESTO



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I. OUR ORIGINS

“Our Manifesto” is the product of a process of ideological education, debate, and political initiative carried out by the Editorial Collective. Founded in June 2020, the Collective is composed of militants drawn from a dissolved Maoist organization, Fronte della Gioventù Comunista, CARC, alternative trade unionism, and from individuals with no prior organizational affiliation. It carries out theoretical-political elaboration, ideological education, and political and trade-union orientation within mass work. Its members have participated in building political, cultural, and trade-union organizations and in promoting student and popular mobilizations, workers’ strikes, and territorial and inter-regional union agreements. The majority of its members are young. The Collective’s main objective is to support and promote the formation and unification of different Maoist forces, both individual and collective. Its task is to work for the affirmation of Maoism in Italy as the ideological basis for the reconstruction of Antonio Gramsci’s Communist Party of Italy.

II. IDEOLOGICAL REFERENCES: MARXISM-LENINISM-MAOISM, PRINCIPALLY MAOISM





1. MARXISM

1.1. Marxism, the first stage of communist ideology

Marxism is the first stage of the revolutionary ideology of the international proletariat—communist ideology. As the expression of the immense work of Marx and Engels, Marxism is the theoretical product of class struggle throughout the whole history of humanity. This struggle, linked to the revolutionary transformation of socio-economic relations, is reflected at the level of ideology¹. Marx showed that historically progressive classes striving for revolutionary transformation have always required specific ideologies through which they could understand reality and transform it². With the emergence of capitalist relations of production—based on the extraction of

¹ On Practice by Mao Tse-tung presents the theory of dialectical materialism in relation to the foundations of the development of knowledge and its connection to historically progressive classes across different stages of human development.

(https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_16.htm)

² “In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.” [Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, (*emphasis added*)

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>



surplus value from wage labor and thus on the generalization of commodity production³—the antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie also developed. The earliest socialist and communist conceptions reflected this antagonism but lacked an adequate theoretical foundation. They were therefore not yet truly scientific: they were not grounded in dialectical materialism and did not arise from a real understanding of social relations and class struggle⁴. Marx and Engels thus had to begin with the elaboration of the proletarian worldview, that is, with the development of the philosophy of dialectical materialism and its application to history and to class struggle.

1.2. Dialectical materialism and historical materialism

The development of dialectical materialism took shape through the struggle against classical German philosophy (Fichte, Schelling, Kant, and above all Hegel) and against the limitations of Ludwig Feuerbach's materialism, which failed to recognize the importance of human practice. In the course of this struggle,

³ For an understanding of the categories of “surplus value” and the “exploitation of labor-power,” as well as for a proper treatment of the concept of the commodity as a unity of use-value and exchange-value (value), and for its distinction from the concepts of “product” or “good,” see in particular the first six sections of *Capital*, Volume I by Karl Marx (1867).

⁴ Such an understanding could only arise from the application of dialectical materialism and, in particular, of dialectical-materialist logic, as emphasized by Vladimir Lenin in his *Philosophical Notebooks*.



Marx and Engels extracted the rational core of Hegel's dialectical logic⁵ and forged a new type of materialism, distinct from all earlier forms of materialism produced in the development of human thought. Dialectical materialism, as applied by Marx and Engels to history, class struggle, and the study of socio-economic structures and their political and ideological superstructures, gave rise to historical materialism. A concise exposition of the theses of historical materialism can be found, among other places, in Marx's foundational text of January 1859 entitled "*Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*."⁶

⁵ These elements are found primarily in the following works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Science of Logic* (2 vols.), the philosophical section of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (vol. I), and, to a lesser extent, the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (three volumes in the Laterza editions).

⁶ "My inquiry led me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life... the general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarised as follows: In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely



1.3. Marxist economic science and Capital

On the basis of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, Marx and Engels developed—through their struggle against vulgar bourgeois economics and their critique of classical political economy, particularly Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Ricardo (1772–1823), from whom they also drew a rational core—a scientific economic theory corresponding to the fundamental interests of the proletariat and of the oppressed and exploited masses.

This theory was expounded by Marx in *Capital* and in the three volumes of *Theories of Surplus Value*. It is also necessary to take into account the vast body of preparatory works by both Marx and Engels, as well as the major effort undertaken by Engels to give definitive form to the third volume of *Capital* and, after Marx's death, to synthesize the further development of Marxist economic theory in light of new economic phenomena.

expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure [Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>].



A concise presentation of several fundamental questions of Marxist economic science can also be found in the relevant sections of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*.⁷

Capitalism rests on private ownership of the means of production (factories, technologies, raw materials, ownership of agricultural and urban land, firms and enterprises of various kinds, etc.) and on the historical formation of a working class—the proletariat—which possesses nothing but its labor-power as a commodity to sell on the market in exchange for wages. The capitalist, however, compels the wage laborer to produce value beyond the value of his or her labor-power. This surplus can reach such a level that, in many sectors of production today, one can observe that a worker reproduces the value of his or her wage in as little as half an hour of daily labor. All socially necessary and abstract labor performed beyond what is required to reproduce the worker's labor-power constitutes surplus value⁸. Surplus value is realized through the sale of

⁷<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/>

⁸ In *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Marx provides a concise exposition of the question of wages, surplus value, and a critique of the prevailing theory according to which the capitalist pays the worker, more or less adequately, for his labour.

Marx demonstrates that the capitalist does not pay for labour as such—indeed, labour itself cannot be a commodity—but rather pays for labour-power, that is, a specific commodity with unique characteristics. “*Since Lassalle’s death, there has asserted itself in our party the scientific understanding that wages are not what they appear to be—namely, the value, or price, of labor—but only a masked form for the value, or price, of labor power. Thereby, the whole bourgeois conception of wages hitherto, as well as*



commodities, becoming capital (and thus subject to further investment in means of production and labor-power) and revenue, that is, consumption for the capitalists themselves. In order to extract the greatest possible surplus value, capitalism is compelled to intensify the exploitation of wage laborers and to worsen their conditions, both in relative and in absolute terms.

The antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat entails a broader contradiction between the interests and living and working conditions of the popular masses and the system of exploitation imposed by capitalism. This demonstrates that the abolition of the capitalist system of exploitation and its gradual replacement by a society based on collective ownership and management of the means of production is a vital necessity for the vast majority of humanity.

Marx and Engels showed that capitalism is destined to perish because of its internal contradictions, chief among them the fact

all the criticism hitherto directed against this conception, was thrown overboard once and for all. It was made clear that the wage worker has permission to work for his own subsistence—that is, to live, only insofar as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co-consumers of surplus value); that the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labor by extending the working day, or by developing the productivity—that is, increasing the intensity or labor power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labor is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labor develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment.” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch02.htm>)



that the extraction of surplus value produces an irreconcilable antagonism within capitalist society between bourgeoisie and proletariat and creates an obstacle to the development of the productive forces, thereby preventing the satisfaction of human needs.

The economic theory of Marx and Engels rejects reformism and the possibility of peaceful reconciliation between antagonistic classes, and instead raises the banner of class struggle, revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism, and communism.

1.4. Scientific socialism

In the struggle against the various utopian socialist and communist revolutionary theories, as well as against anarchist doctrines, Marx and Engels also developed a scientific theory of class struggle (scientific socialism). This theory defines the revolutionary tasks of the proletariat and outlines the forms of organization corresponding to those tasks, foremost among them the communist party. The greatest achievement of scientific socialism was Marx's theory that revolutionary violence must lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the form of state corresponding to the transition from capitalism to communism, and as the highest possible form of democracy for the proletariat and the popular masses.



1.5. Marxism: Three Sources and Three Component Parts

In his foundational work *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*⁹, Lenin presents, in a concise and powerful form, Marxism as consisting of dialectical materialism, Marxist economic theory, and scientific socialism. Subsequently, revisionists and opportunists—seeking to appropriate Marxism in order to distort it and turn it against the proletariat—have consistently misrepresented its content and fundamental characteristics as the first stage of communist ideology.

Marx and Engels could not have waged these immense ideological and theoretical struggles without fully identifying with the condition, interests, and struggle of the proletariat and the oppressed and exploited masses, nor without actively engaging in the class struggle in order to lead it, at the ideological, political, and organizational levels, along a truly revolutionary path.

1.6. Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto

The birth of Marxism is inseparable from Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848). In this work, the theory of class struggle is given a scientific foundation, demonstrating that class

⁹ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/mar/x01.htm>



struggle is the driving force of history and the key to its transformation. Marx and Engels conceived this text as a guide to proletarian revolution and to the construction of a revolutionary political party of the proletariat. This historic struggle for the building of the Communist Party anticipated, by a few years, the founding of the First International.

From the time of its drafting to the present day, *The Communist Manifesto* has served as a fundamental weapon for the ideological and political formation of proletarians, of the advanced elements of the popular masses, of rebellious youth, and of communist militants.

1.7. The First International

Marxism had not yet achieved hegemony within the international revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels undertook a decisive historical step: the construction of an international party capable of developing and leading the proletariat's class struggle toward proletarian revolution on a world scale.

Opportunist and petty-bourgeois revolutionary tendencies—above all the anarchist ones—actively sabotaged this effort to build an international party of the proletarian revolution. They denounced it as bureaucratic and authoritarian, while systematically attacking Marx, waging smear campaigns and engaging in factional intrigues in order to undermine its leadership and direction.



Marx and Engels formally dissolved the First International in 1876, though in practice it had already ceased to function in 1872. They made this decision because it was no longer possible to maintain it without giving space and influence to reformist, opportunist, and anarchist tendencies, which had come to dominate it and reduce it to a parasitic apparatus. The First International had, in any case, fulfilled its historical task. It affirmed, both theoretically and politically, the internationalist character of the proletariat's struggle and, above all, laid the foundations for the development of scientific socialism—Marxism—and for the formation of the first Marxist parties on an international scale.

1.8. The formation of Marxist parties

The First International was the political form through which Marxism asserted itself within the revolutionary movement of its time. This decisive historical experience enabled the struggle against opportunist positions and promoted the spread and application of dialectical and historical materialism and of scientific socialism. In this process, the conditions were created for the formation of revolutionary Marxist parties in a number of countries across the world. Since these parties had to confront not only the bourgeoisie but also the powerful reactionary aristocracies inherited from feudalism, they adopted the then new designation of “social-democratic,” expressing the necessary unity between socialist tasks and those of completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The formation of Marxist



parties placed new responsibilities on Marx and Engels, who were called upon to provide overall leadership to the international workers' and revolutionary movement. In particular, it was necessary to wage a consistent struggle against petty-bourgeois and reactionary conceptions of a semi-anarchist and “national-socialist” type, as exemplified by Lassalle. Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875)¹⁰, published by Engels in 1891 in the theoretical journal of the German Social-Democratic Party, represented a decisive moment in this struggle and remains essential to this day for a clear understanding of the fundamental principles of the maximum program of the proletarian revolution. On March 14, 1883, Karl Marx—the founder of the scientific ideology of communism—passed away. After his death, the tasks of defending, developing, and advancing Marxism fell to Friedrich Engels. Under his leadership, the Marxist parties founded the Second International in 1889. Six years later, on August 5, 1895, Engels—the teacher of the international proletariat after Marx—also passed away.

1.9. Marx on the Paris Commune

In 1871, the Parisian proletariat “stormed heaven” through revolution and the establishment of a revolutionary government. The events of 1871 marked a decisive turning point in world history, opening the era of proletarian revolutions and, with the establishment of revolutionary democracy for the working class

¹⁰ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/>



and the popular masses, the era of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In *The Civil War in France*, Marx drew the fundamental lessons of this experience and provided a guiding synthesis for future proletarian revolutions. Above all, he showed that the Paris Commune had demonstrated in practice: 1) the necessity of carrying out the revolution through the systematic use of proletarian violence to crush the resistance and counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie and the reactionary classes; 2) the universal validity of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the form of state corresponding to the socialist phase of the transition from capitalism to communism.

In the same work, Marx made clear that no reconciliation is possible between the proletariat and the popular masses on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other, except at the cost of the defeat of the masses themselves. He also exposed the fact that the reactionary classes shrink from no crime in their struggle against the proletarian revolution.

In this work, Marx wrote: *“The civilization and justice of bourgeois order stand out in their lurid light whenever the slaves and drudges of that order rise against their masters. Then this civilization and justice stand forth as undisguised savagery and lawless revenge. Each new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriators of wealth and its producers brings this fact out more glaringly. Even the atrocities of the bourgeois in June 1848 vanish before the ineffable infamy of 1871. The heroic self-sacrifice with which the population of Paris — men, women, and children — fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versailles troops reflects the grandeur of their cause, just as the*



infernal deeds of the soldiery reflect the innate spirit of that civilization of which they are the mercenary vindicators. Glorious civilization indeed, whose great problem is how to rid itself of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over! To find a parallel to the conduct of Thiers and his bloodhounds, we must go back to the times of Sulla and the two Triumvirates of Rome. The same wholesale slaughter in cold blood; the same indifference to age and sex in the massacre; the same system of torturing prisoners; the same proscriptions, but now of a whole class; the same savage hunt for hidden leaders, lest a single one escape; the same denunciations of political and private enemies; the same indifference to the slaughter of people entirely foreign to the struggle. The only difference is that the Romans had no mitrailleuses for dispatching the proscribed in masses, and that they did not have 'the law in their hands,' nor on their lips the cry of 'civilization.'"

Marx concluded his text with the following epic and prophetic tribute to the Paris Commune: "*Working-class Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators, history has already nailed them to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.*"



2. LENINISM

2.1. Leninism, the second stage of communist ideology

Leninism is the second stage in the development of communist ideology. Some theories of Marx and Engels had already reached their most complete and developed form; these were fully assumed and further developed within Leninism. Other theories of Marx and Engels that had remained in an embryonic state were further developed. Finally, Leninism developed a series of new theories of universal validity.

2.2. Lenin and the specification of Marxism in Russia

Around 1880, Marxism began to spread in Russia. Georgi Plekhanov (who, after about two decades, would shift toward revisionism and Menshevism) played an important role in introducing and defending Marxist theory and philosophy within the Russian revolutionary movement. However, this work was not yet firmly rooted in the concrete conditions of Russia and of the Russian Empire. It was above all Lenin who took on the historic task of developing Marxism in direct connection with that reality. This immense struggle was decisive in winning over and transforming various intellectuals and revolutionary workers influenced by populist positions, as well as a number of workers' circles previously engaged only in economic struggle,



to Marxism. In 1898, as a result of this struggle, the first Russian Marxist party adhering to the Second International was formed, taking the name Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). However, this founding—despite its importance—remained partly formal due to the wave of arrests that decimated its Central Committee.

2.3. The struggle against economism and the formation of the party

In this context, a section of Russian social democrats began to promote economistic theses, reintroducing the positions of the German revisionist Eduard Bernstein. In essence, they argued that in order to overthrow tsarism it was necessary to develop a broad movement of political reforms and of economic and social struggles. Some of them, positioning themselves to the left of the economistic current, claimed that the development of the economic struggle would itself assume revolutionary and ultimately insurrectionary forms. Others went even further, arguing that the central task was the development of economic struggle for the establishment of socialism. Thus, economistic currents—whether of the right or of the “left”—upheld the necessity of an immediate program of political, economic, and social demands, while postponing the question of revolution to an indefinite future. In doing so, they denied the necessity and centrality of the minimum revolutionary program, that is, the political struggle to overthrow tsarism. They also denied the



necessity of a revolutionary political party of the proletariat and of a revolutionary movement guided by class consciousness, that is, by Marxism.

2.4. The Leninist theory of the party

Lenin's struggle against economism and movementism culminated in the affirmation of Marxist positions at the London Congress of 1903. At this congress, the nucleus of the future communist party emerged in the form of the Bolshevik tendency. Immediately after the congress, the Bolsheviks took up the task of elaborating a strategic plan for the insurrection against tsarism. In the course of the struggle against economism and adventurism, and at the Third Congress of the RSDLP, Lenin developed the Marxist theory of the party, bringing it to an unprecedented level of coherence and systematic form. The Leninist theory of the party was Lenin's first major universal contribution to Marxism. It established an indissoluble unity between the struggle against revisionism and the development of revolutionary theory; the centrality of revolutionary politics; the theory of class consciousness and of the formation of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat; the conception of the party as composed of professional cadres; the clandestine character of the party; and the understanding of the party's formation as inseparable from the elaboration of a plan for insurrection.



2.5. The 1905 Revolution and the Military Theory of the Proletariat

The 1905 Revolution marked the definitive transformation of bourgeois liberalism into a counter-revolutionary tendency and further exposed the decomposition of Menshevism as a revisionist current opposed to the Leninist line of revolution. With 1905, a second step was taken in the development of Marxism into Leninism, and a clear break emerged between Bolshevism and the Second Socialist International aligned with the Mensheviks. The 1905 Revolution did not take the form of the French Revolution—that is, a form characterized by a single great insurrectionary battle. Rather, it developed as a combination of guerrilla warfare in the urban centers and peasant uprisings in the countryside. With Lenin's synthesis of the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905, Engels' introduction to *The Class Struggles in France*¹¹ definitively ceased to serve as a tactical guide for the initiative of the international proletariat.

During the 1905 Revolution, Lenin outlined the first systematic formulation of the military theory of the proletarian revolution and, in close connection with it, further developed the theory of the party. He advanced a general theory of revolution of universal validity, applicable also to the European imperialist countries. On the basis of the experience of 1905, Lenin argued

¹¹<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/intro.htm>



that the revolutionary process would be characterized by a prolonged phase of frontal conflicts, alternating with intermediate phases marked by guerrilla warfare.

Lenin also emphasized that the revolution would no longer follow the path of the French Revolution in another fundamental respect. The latter had been characterized by the offensive initiative of a small revolutionary minority that drew the majority of the population behind it. By contrast, for Lenin the revolution would take the form of a prolonged civil war between two sections of the population. Subsequent historical development fully confirmed this theory.

During the 1905 Revolution, Lenin further defined the characteristics of the revolutionary party of the proletariat guided by communist ideology, arguing that such a party must be structured to lead the revolutionary process. The Bolshevik Party, on this basis, conceived the revolutionary process after 1905 as a prolonged process characterized by a “zigzag” development. Building on the structures formed before and during 1905, and through the subsequent development of revolutionary struggle—particularly the effort to transform the imperialist World War into civil war—the Bolsheviks developed their armed forces and constructed the Red Army.

Lenin’s theory of revolution as a prolonged phase of civil war, together with his theory of the revolutionary party and of the construction of the Red Army, represented a further advance of Marxism to a new stage.



2.6. Leninist theory of hegemony

The Revolution of 1905 revealed the strength of the peasant movement. Lenin gave a masterful theoretical formulation of this new phenomenon in the *Draft Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the RSDLP*¹², developing Marx's theory of rent through its application to the peasant question¹³ and combating the corresponding reformist positions of the Mensheviks. Here we find a further step in the transition from Marxism to Leninism concerning, as Gramsci noted, the organic elaboration of the theory of hegemony. Lenin, deepening the struggle against Menshevism and marking a sharp break with the Second International, developed a new theory of the democratic revolution, affirming that it could not be led by the bourgeoisie, but rather by the proletariat on the basis of the initiative of a revolutionary worker–peasant bloc. Against the “anti-Tsarist” government proposed by the liberals, the Bolsheviks countered with the revolutionary worker–peasant front and upheld the necessity of separating the proletariat, the peasantry, and the popular masses from the liberals. The Mensheviks, on the contrary, advocated an alliance with the liberals, exaggerating the contradictions between bourgeois liberalism and Tsarism and denying the revolutionary role of the peasantry.

¹² <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/revagpro/>

¹³ It is well known that Marx, in his theory of rent, abstracts at a general level from the existence of the peasantry, limiting his analysis to landowners, capitalist tenants, and the agricultural proletariat.



In 1903, Lenin maintained that the question of class consciousness presented itself as an irreducible contradiction between “bourgeois ideology” and “proletarian ideology.” After 1905, he emphasized that the question of leadership in the revolutionary process presented itself in the following terms: *“Either bourgeois hegemony or proletarian hegemony!”* This marked a further major step beyond Marxism itself, relating—as Gramsci underlined—to the elaboration of the theory of proletarian hegemony as the basis for the revolution and for the new revolutionary state.

2.7. The minimum program and the uninterrupted revolution

In the epoch of imperialism, and therefore under entirely different conditions, the Mensheviks reposed the nineteenth-century model of the struggle for democracy associated with the Second International. Based on the experience of the French Revolution, this model centered on sharpening contradictions with a more or less residual aristocracy in order to bring the most radical fractions of the bourgeoisie to power, until such a role would eventually pass to the proletariat itself. As Stalin pointed out¹⁴, for the first time in history Lenin posed the question of the relationship between the democratic revolution led by the proletariat and the maximum program of socialism as a question

¹⁴ STALIN, Works, Vol. 1, p. 15.



of uninterrupted revolution. Lenin thus not only elaborated a new theory of the proletarian revolution based on the question of hegemony, but, in indissoluble connection with it, also reformulated the relationship between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism. With this reformulation, the democratic revolution ceased to be part of the completion of the bourgeois revolution and instead became an integral part of the proletarian revolutionary process.

Although formulated by Lenin in relation to Russia and the Tsarist Empire, this reformulation assumed a universal character. It was valid simultaneously—albeit in different forms—not only for Tsarist-imperialist autocracy in Russia, but also for colonial and semi-colonial countries, for small nations oppressed by imperialism, and even for the liberal countries of Europe themselves. In these countries, Lenin's theory of uninterrupted revolution opened the way to a different role and positioning of the democratic minimum program compared with its role in the conception of the parties of the Second International at the beginning of the twentieth century, when they were still Marxist parties.

With Lenin, the minimum program—rather than being a question related to the preparatory conditions of the proletarian revolution within the bourgeois framework—became an organic part of the development of the proletarian revolution itself. This theory of the organic link, under imperialism, between democratic and socialist revolution assumed fundamental importance during the years of the First Imperialist World War,



particularly in posing the question of transforming the imperialist war into civil war.

2.8. The struggle against the new economism

During the First World War, Lenin also took up the struggle against a new form of economism. He identified it as characteristic of certain opportunist deviations within Marxism in the epoch of imperialism. This tendency separated the revolutionary political struggle for democracy from the broader revolutionary process, ultimately denying it and thereby emptying the struggle for socialism of its substance, reducing it to mere revolutionary propaganda.

2.9. The theory of imperialism

From the last decades of the nineteenth century to the early years of the twentieth century, the capitalist system underwent a profound transformation, becoming an imperialist system and passing from a phase of maturity to one of decline¹⁵. The

¹⁵ *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>) [The text begins on p. 186 of Volume 22 of Lenin's *Collected Works*]. For further study, see also *Collected Works*, Vol. 39: *Notebooks on Imperialism*. It is also useful to compare Lenin's text with the following works by revisionist theorists John Hobson and Rudolf Hilferding, respectively *Imperialism* (1902) and *Finance Capital* (1909). Both works were extensively used and critically engaged by Lenin in the development of his own analysis.



“Marxist” theorists of the Second International denied that imperialism represented the terminal phase of capitalism and advanced apologetic theories such as the possibility of separating imperialist policy from the economic structure of imperialism, or that of “super-imperialism,” that is, the progressive fusion of the imperialist powers. In essence, they denied the connection between imperialism, imperialist wars, and world revolution, thereby politically and organizationally disarming the proletariat and the popular masses in the face of both internal and external militarism.

Lenin developed Marxism also from the standpoint of its fundamental economic laws, demonstrating how capitalism necessarily transforms itself into imperialism, into reactionary wars, and into revolutionary wars of various kinds. His 1916 work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* provided a scientific basis for the struggle against reactionary pacifism, opportunism, and revisionism, and for the construction of a Communist International founded on the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into civil war. This work thus provided a further ideological and political basis for the October Revolution and for the formation of the Communist International.

Subsequently, Lenin developed several fundamental theses contained in this work, showing how the transformation of free competition into monopoly led to the progressive fusion of private and public monopolies with the state apparatus. Lenin summarized this transformation with the category of State Monopoly Capitalism. According to Lenin, with this development bourgeois democracy, typical of the liberal phase



of the nineteenth century, is transformed into an oligarchic direction, creating further conditions for the fusion of the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialism.

2.10. The October Revolution and the critique of Trotskyist conceptions

In October 1917, the first real proletarian revolution took place, following the earlier, embryonic attempt represented by the Paris Commune of 1871, which “stormed heaven.” The October Revolution, taken as a whole, was the expression of a great revolutionary plan that Lenin had begun to outline as early as 1903 with the affirmation of the Bolshevik tendency at the head of the party.

Without the theory of the party, without the military theory of the proletarian revolution that replaced all previous conceptions, without the theory of imperialism, and without Lenin’s leadership, there would have been no conquest of the Soviets—which for a certain period were controlled by revisionist and opportunist forces—and no Red Army capable of carrying out the insurrection of October 1917. John Reed’s book *Ten Days That Shook the World*¹⁶ presents a journalistic and partially fictionalized account that reflects spontaneist, movementist, workerist, and Trotskyist conceptions still hegemonic in the so-called far left. These conceptions deny Leninism and its guiding

¹⁶<https://www.marxists.org/archive/reed/1919/10days/10days/>



role in the construction of the party and in the leadership of the revolutionary process.

2.11. “State and Revolution” (summer 1917)

In the summer of 1917, Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*¹⁷, a decisive text both for its systematic and coherent exposition of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state and for its formulation of the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the transition from capitalism to communism. With the October Revolution, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat was established, based on the worker–peasant bloc.

Lenin thus developed both the theory and the practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the initial phase of the construction of socialism.

2.12. “Philosophical Notebooks” and “Materialism and Empirio-Criticism”

The construction of the Bolshevik Party and the development of the revolutionary process required a further advance in the philosophy of dialectical materialism. To this end, Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*¹⁸, a fundamental text directed against neo-positivism and logical empiricism, and the

¹⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/>

¹⁸ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/volume14.htm>



Philosophical Notebooks, based mainly on excerpts from and commentaries on the works of Hegel. *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* struck at the ideological foundations of the opportunist tendency developing within the Bolshevik Party, showing that philosophy is one of the principal fields of struggle against opportunism and revisionism. Lenin demonstrated that without the struggle to affirm dialectical materialism it is impossible to build the revolutionary communist party of the proletariat.

In his *Philosophical Notebooks*¹⁹, he emphasized the importance of the law of the identity of opposites and stressed that the principal aspect is the rupture of equilibrium, that is, development through qualitative leaps. Lenin, with regard to dialectics, emphasized the unity of logic, theory of knowledge, and method, and on this basis argued that everything ultimately leads back to the question of logic. On this basis, Lenin concluded that the Marxists of the Second International had not truly understood Marx.

2.13. Materialist dialectics and the struggle against the Second International

Lenin's work on Hegel played an important role in the development of Leninism and in the struggle to affirm a revolutionary conception of movement and development against the gradualism of the Second International.

¹⁹ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/cw/volume38.htm>



His struggle against gradualism and evolutionism, and against the form of materialism that prevailed in the Second International, was fundamental in the Bolsheviks' effort to build the Third International.

During the years of the First Imperialist World War, on the basis of this struggle against the philosophy of gradual evolutionism, Lenin advanced the necessity of a split with the parties of the Second International and of the formation of a new International, the Third Communist International.

2.14. The founding of the Third International

In March 1919, the First Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow. The following year, the Second Congress was convened, during which the 21 conditions of admission were established—a fundamental reference text that remains relevant for revolutionary communists to this day. In July 1921, the Third Congress was held, marking the beginning of the long process of Bolshevikization of the communist parties in the struggle against anti-Leninist tendencies that later degenerated into opportunism, revisionism, and counter-revolution. At the Third Congress, the theory of the front was formulated for the first time as one of the forms of struggle aimed at disintegrating the social-democratic and opportunist forces that still retained influence among the working class and the popular masses.



2.15. The birth of the USSR and the union between the struggle for socialism and the struggle against imperialism

With Lenin, the Third International also formulated the theory of world proletarian revolution as a unity between socialist revolutions and anti-colonial and national liberation revolutions. In 1922, the USSR was established as the expression of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party's struggle to unite the revolutionary struggle for self-determination and democracy with the struggle for socialism.



3. STALIN AND THE AFFIRMATION OF MARXISM-LENINISM

3.1. The struggle for the affirmation of Leninism

Within the Bolshevik Party itself there were deep anti-Leninist currents. After Lenin's death, the Bolshevik Communist Party of the USSR was led by three leading figures. Only one of them, Stalin, was a Leninist. After the death of the great Lenin, opportunist tendencies were also present *"within the Communist International, which until its Fifth Congress was under the presidency of Zinoviev, with their corresponding predominance within it and within a large part of the parties of the International Communist Movement. The Fourteenth Conference of the CPSU(b), in April 1925, condemned Trotsky's theses on the impossibility of building socialism in one country. The Fourteenth Congress of the CPSU(b), in December 1925, defeated the new "opposition" led by Zinoviev and Kamenev. The enlarged plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), held from March to April 1925, approved the theses for the 'Bolshevization of the communist parties of the Communist International', a struggle that raised the ideological, political, and organizational level of communist parties throughout the world. At this plenum it was established that the International was guided by Marxism–Leninism, because "Leninism is the Marxism of the epoch of*



monopoly capital, of imperialist wars, and of proletarian revolution."²⁰.

Texts such as *Trotskyism or Leninism* (1924), *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924), *Questions of Leninism* (1926), *History of the CPSU(b)* (1938), and several others mark the struggle conducted by Stalin for the affirmation of Leninism as the second stage of Marxism and for the construction of Bolshevized communist parties based on Leninism. Only the victorious conclusion of this struggle represented the effective affirmation of Leninism as the second stage of Marxism and as the guiding theory of the Third International and of the World Proletarian Revolution. Leninism, including the Universal Contributions of Comrade Stalin, therefore assumed the designation of Marxism–Leninism.

Stalin applied Lenin's line in the struggle against both right opportunism and false "left" opportunism. Comrade Stalin fought these deviations by affirming: *"Those on the 'left' (left-wing deviationists) are those on the right who mask their right-wing position with left-wing phrases" (...)* *"It must not be forgotten that the right and the 'ultra-left' are truly twins, that both, consequently, take an opportunistic position, the difference between them being that while the right does not always hide its opportunism, the left invariably camouflages its opportunism*

²⁰ *Uphold the Red Flag of the Communist International and Its Seventh Congress - Problems of the evaluation of the 7th Congress of the Communist International – Comintern* (Document of the Communist Party of Brazil - Red Fraction)

<https://ci-ic.net/blog/2022/01/04/communist-party-of-brazil-uphold-the-red-flag-of-the-communist-international-and-of-its-7th-congress/>



*with ‘revolutionary’ phrases.” [Joseph Stalin, *The Struggle Against Right and “Ultra-Left” Deviations*, 1926].*

Towards the end of the 1920s, the anti-Leninist tendencies represented by trotskyism, councilism, bordigism, workerism (e.g., Kollontai’s so-called “Workers’ Opposition”), Bukharin’s positions, etc., had transformed or were transforming themselves into openly reactionary tendencies. Their affirmation would have meant the end of the Communist International, socialism, and the USSR. The thorough struggle conducted by Stalin against revisionism created the necessary conditions to advance along the road of socialism, to combat the subsequent attempts at the restoration of capitalism, and to affirm the red line of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International for the struggle against fascism and for the development of the world proletarian revolution.

3.2. Universal Contributions of Comrade Stalin

Chairman Mao summarized the fundamental contributions of Comrade Stalin in the following way: *“Guided by Stalin, the CPSU and the Soviet people persevered in the line of socialist industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture in the country and achieved great successes in the transformation and construction of socialism (...) Guided by Stalin, the CPSU and the Soviet people and army fought arduous battles and won the great victory in the anti-fascist war. In the struggle against opportunism of every kind, against the enemies of Leninism, the Trotskyites, the followers of Zinoviev and Bukharin and other*



agents of the bourgeoisie, Stalin defended and developed Marxism–Leninism. Through his theoretical works, the immortal literature of Marxism–Leninism, Stalin made an invaluable contribution to the international communist movement. Guided by Stalin, the CPSU and the Soviet government carried out a foreign policy which, taken as a whole, corresponded to proletarian internationalism and gave great support to the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of various countries, including that of the Chinese people. Stalin was a protagonist in the course of historical development, leading the revolutionary struggle; he was an irreconcilable enemy of imperialism and of all reactionaries. The figure of Stalin is indissolubly linked to the struggles of the great CPSU and the great Soviet people, and is inseparable from the revolutionary struggles of the peoples of the entire world.” (CPC, On the Question of Stalin, 1963)

3.3. The historic Seventh Congress of the Communist International

The Communist Party of Brazil – Red Fraction states: “*The Seventh Congress represented the conclusion of a long two-line struggle within the Communist Party (b) of the USSR and the Executive Committee of the Communist International. It took more than 17 years to resolve it. It was at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International that the opportunist positions defended by Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev-Bukharin were definitively defeated and an Executive Committee was*



established for the first time under the leadership of Comrade Stalin.”²¹ .

At this congress the fundamental thesis of fascism as an expression of Finance Capital was affirmed. This thesis took up and developed Lenin’s conception of the reactionary decomposition, in an oligarchic direction, of liberal bourgeois democracy.

The Seventh Congress liquidated the positions of left social-democracy, Trotskyism, and Bordigism, which essentially converged in the thesis of fascism as a Bonapartist regime. On the basis of an ahistorical and dogmatic interpretation of certain passages from a text by Marx concerning *The Class Struggles in France*, these positions argued that fascism was a reactionary regime of the middle strata which, on the basis of a mass political-military organization, had succeeded in seizing control of the state. According to this conception, this supposed regime would oppose both the industrial bourgeoisie and the proletariat at the same time, disciplining the former under its “iron heel” and imposing itself through force and repression upon the latter.

This theory of Bonapartism was characterized by two apparently opposed versions. In the first, so to speak, “left” opportunist version, broad sections of the popular masses, such as the peasants for example, were considered reactionary and therefore

²¹ *Uphold the red flag of the Communist International and of its 7th Congress - Problems of the evaluation of the 7th Congress of the Communist International – Comintern* (cited)



the social base of fascism²². Obviously, this conception translated into a rejection of the category of hegemony and opposition to the formation of a revolutionary democratic popular class bloc led by the proletariat.

In the second version, so to speak, “right” opportunist, the rise of fascism was seen as the expression of the revolt of the popular masses against the old parties and the old bourgeois institutions. It was necessary to “relate” to this revolt in order to succeed, at least in part, in directing it and transforming it in a “revolutionary” sense²³. In both cases, the theory of fascism as

²² These conceptions remain widespread today among workerist forces (linked to the experience and positions of the old *Autonomia Operaia* [italian for “Workers’ Autonomy”]). For example, such positions interpreted reactionary movements such as the “No Vax” movement as expressions of the interests of petty-bourgeois strata, including sections of the popular classes represented by taxi drivers, small restaurateurs, small traders, and so on.

²³ These conceptions are widespread among left-wing populist forces, which at times combine with certain Trotskyist sectors or with pseudo-Marxist-Leninist forces holding positions such as those of the Communist Party and the FGC under the leadership of Rizzo (it is enough to recall their positions during the “*Forconi*” [italian for “Pitchfork” – movement]), or, today, the CARC-nPCI (see, for example, their theory of the need to intervene within the social base of the Lega or in movements such as the “No Vax” movement in order to counterpose a revolutionary mobilization of the masses to their reactionary mobilization). Comparable to this type of interpretation is also the revisionist-Trotskyist line of Togliatti, with his theory of fascism as a reactionary mass regime—thus representative also of various popular strata—his appeals to the “Blackshirts,” and, subsequently—after the Grandi agenda of July 24, 1943, which formally restored power to the King—his collaboration with recycled fascists within the front led by the monarchy and the Anglo-Americans. This continued up to the amnesty promoted by Togliatti in 1946 for fascist forces.



Bonapartism resulted in the underestimation of fascism and in a line that opened the doors, in one form or another, to the development of its influence and initiative, politically and organizationally disarming the proletariat and opposing the battle of the Third International for the construction of the revolutionary popular front based on the hegemony of the proletariat.

The Seventh Congress developed Lenin's theory of the policy of the front as a weapon in the struggle against social-democracy and opportunism: *"The policy of the United Front implemented at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International represented the culmination of the two-line struggle initiated by Lenin at the Third Congress of the International against opportunist positions masked as left positions, petty-bourgeois positions that denied the necessity of preparing the communist parties and the role of the masses in the revolution"(...) "The Seventh Congress of the Communist International was the first Congress that, by defeating both right and 'left' opportunist lines, succeeded in addressing the problem of the United Front in a comprehensive way. It presented and confronted strategic and tactical problems of the world revolution that were fully developed only by the Chinese Revolution and by Maoism."*²⁴ *"It was only with the holding of the Seventh Congress in 1935, with the defeat of Trotskyist, Zinovievite, and Bukharinite*

²⁴ *Uphold the red flag of the Communist International and of its 7th Congress - Problems of the evaluation of the 7th Congress of the Communist International – Comintern (cited)*



positions, that the International Communist Movement firmly adopted and applied the necessity of building the United Front and establishing the fundamental lines of a strategy and tactics of proletarian revolution. On this basis the International Communist Movement was able to open a new stage in its development, that of the existence of communist parties founded on mass influence, developing guerrilla wars and building a united front as instruments for carrying out the revolution, as was applied in dozens of countries during the resistance to fascism, the triumph of the Great Patriotic War and the victory of the USSR, culminating in the triumph of the Great Chinese Revolution.”²⁵.

3.4. The Third Communist International and the military theory of the proletariat

The military theory of the proletarian revolution as a prolonged period of civil war between two sections of the population found important confirmation in the October Revolution, which marked the beginning of several years of revolutionary war against internal counterrevolution and external attempts by international imperialism to defeat the revolution itself. During this revolutionary war, the need to develop the military theory of proletarian revolution became evident.

²⁵ *Uphold the red flag of the Communist International and of its 7th Congress - Problems of the evaluation of the 7th Congress of the Communist International – Comintern* (cited)



The experience of the First World War itself had already demonstrated, at a general level, the necessity of a military theory that would include, in addition to strategy, tactics, and combat, a further intermediate level between strategy and tactics. If the military experiences of the nineteenth century had conceived military strategy as centered on a few great decisive offensive battles, the development of imperialism, the involvement of the entire population in war, and the consequent formation of large armies sustained by the various national economies had brought to the fore the problem of prolonged wars. This in turn created the necessity for complex combined operations of strategic importance capable of preparing the decisive clashes. In the revolutionary war that developed with the October Revolution, a struggle emerged between different conceptions regarding, in general, the character of the military theory of the proletarian revolution and, in particular, regarding what came to be defined as “operational art”, that is, the level of theory that deals with the development and coordination of complex operations of strategic importance within the framework of a prolonged war.

This struggle was closely connected to the question of the confrontation between Marxism–Leninism and opportunism and revisionism, represented above all by Trotskyism. While the latter maintained that the military theory of the proletarian revolution and of the socialist state should be an expression of the application of the most advanced developments of the prevailing theory of war between states, the Marxist–Leninist positions affirmed that the proletariat had to elaborate its own



revolutionary theory of war. This contradiction was also connected to the problem of the role of military experts originating from the bourgeoisie and from Tsarism who had decided to pass over to the camp of the revolution and socialism. While the first position placed primary emphasis on assigning these experts positions of command and direction in the conduct of military activity, the second emphasized instead the importance that the proletariat develop its own military experts.

With regard to the question of operational art, the confrontation — which was already emerging in the problem of evaluating the operations of the Red Army in the revolutionary war of 1919–1921 against the reactionary offensive of Poland — concerned the conception of operations of strategic importance. The theorists of operational art working under the influence of Trotskyist positions underestimated the necessity of combining offensive operations with adequate preparation and with adequate military, political, logistical, and economic support. The connection between this conception of operational art and an approach linked to the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution — as the extension of socialism on an international scale through repeated offensive wars — was evident. In an apparently paradoxical form, all this was also connected with a theory of war that fully adopted the dominant theses in the General Staffs of the imperialist countries concerning the simple necessity of combining offensive and defensive action. In this way it was denied that the proletariat cannot conduct a defensive war without falling into passivity and ultimately being defeated.



Theories such as those of Svechin, who in his essay *Strategy* theorized the use of “limited war,” represent another form of opportunism in relation to the semi-Trotskyist theories of Tukhachevsky, which subjectively aimed at producing rapid and “decisive” breakthroughs in the enemy front. The definitive defeat, under the Marxist–Leninist leadership of Comrade Stalin, of the influence of these conceptions during the 1930s paved the way for the formulation of a military theory adequate for the struggle against fascism and imperialism.

This theory is linked in particular to a correct conception of the question of strategic defense and of the relationship between strategic defense and strategic offense, which may be summarized as follows: the development of strategic defense constitutes the first phase of the revolutionary war against fascism and imperialism and the basis for the development of the strategic offensive.

Without a correct military theory, the USSR would not have been able to wage a prolonged war that resulted in a decisive victory against Nazi-fascism. Chairman Gonzalo states: *“In that war there was a sinister plan: ...the black dream they had was to wipe the USSR off the face of the earth. The fragile dream shattered against the power of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the leadership of the Party and of Comrade Stalin, of the Russian proletariat, of the Russian people. Heroic pages, comrades! Stalingrad... There too the dirty, treacherous game of the imperialist allies was clearly seen... they sought that fascist Germany defeat the USSR... What could Russia do in the face of such an assault? Apply strategic defense, and this is what was*



done... together with the tactic of scorched earth, leaving them nothing but bare land.” (Chairman Gonzalo, First Congress; emphasis added).

The influence of opportunist military theories concerning the proletarian revolution and the conduct of war by a socialist country contributed, in the historical context immediately following the October Revolution, to the emergence of a series of insurrectional experiences without concrete prospects. This occurred due to the absence or insufficiency of Bolshevized communist parties and the spread of left social-democratic and anti-Leninist “communist” tendencies.

The civil war in Spain, which began after 1936, together with the further heroic guerrilla war conducted by the Communist Party — which was interrupted after the Second World War only because of the predominance of revisionism — gave an important impetus to the definition of the military theory of the proletariat in relation to the question of the construction of the front and of the people’s army.

Overall, in the struggle against opportunist theories, the balance of the revolutionary experience of the proletariat made possible the development of the military theory of the proletariat and its victorious application not only with regard to the conduct of war by the first socialist state, but also with regard to the very conception of the proletarian revolution in countries that were not yet socialist.



3.5. Instruments of the proletarian revolution

The Seventh Congress, led by Stalin and Dimitrov, laid the basis for the development of political and military strategy of the proletarian revolution in the struggle against fascism, imperialism, and reactionary war, establishing the necessity that, on the basis of the party, a popular front under proletarian hegemony be built and the arming of the masses be advanced. These were the questions — later fully formulated and developed by Mao — of the three instruments of the revolution (Party, Revolutionary Front, People's Army) and of the theory of people's war. This orientation, although still present in an embryonic and partial form, was successfully applied in the wars of liberation against Nazi-fascism and in the construction of the people's democracies within the framework of an uninterrupted revolutionary process.

3.6. The defeat of Nazi-fascism, the defense of the red base of the USSR, and the advance of the world proletarian revolution

We quote from the previously mentioned text of the PCB(FR):
“Once again we emphasize that Chairman Gonzalo proposed to make an assessment of the Communist International, especially of its Seventh Congress, in connection with the world war and with the role of Comrade Stalin.”

How should this statement of Chairman Gonzalo be understood? Evidently in the sense that the assessment of Stalin's work must



be centered on his contributions of a universal character to the International Communist Movement and to Marxism–Leninism, among which stands out the connection between the defeat of Nazi-fascism and the development of the world proletarian revolution.

Chairman Gonzalo also stated: *“The Second World War is an event of great significance in world history, beginning in 1939 and ending in 1945... It is a world war in which on the one hand there is imperialist plunder, the dispute for world hegemony undertaken by Germany under Hitler; but on the other hand there is the defense of socialism and the development of the revolution. Yes, it is very clear and correct to affirm that the war waged by the USSR at that time was a great patriotic war... it was a just defensive war, a great patriotic war and a war that advanced the world revolution, because in addition to that glorious heroic defense, which cost the USSR 20 million lives, there was an anti-imperialist struggle that unfolded in the oppressed nations, principally in China (...) It is the great war of resistance of oppressed nations, such as China, Korea, Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, etc., where the imperialists fled like rats and it was the peoples of those nations who took up arms; those who were fortunate enough to have a Communist Party triumphed and were able to advance, and those who did not have one at least saved themselves by freeing themselves from colonial dependence, such as Indonesia, which as a result of that war was no longer a colony of the Netherlands. There was a sinister plan behind that war: the crusade against the USSR, ... (a word that clearly expresses) their reactionary spirit,*



which was presented by Hitler himself as an anti-Bolshevik crusade, because their black dream was to wipe the USSR off the face of the earth. The fragile dream shattered against the power of the dictatorship of the proletariat, under the leadership of the party and Comrade Stalin, of the Russian proletariat, of the Russian people. Heroic pages, comrades! Stalingrad... There too, the dirty, underhanded game of the imperialist allies was clearly seen... they sought to have fascist Germany defeat the USSR... What could Russia do in the face of such an assault? Apply strategic defense, and that is what was done... Comrades, the dictatorship of the proletariat was at stake, the revolution was at stake... The whole immense event of World War II shook the world and left its mark on mankind, and it yielded great results; not everywhere, for example, in France and Italy, the revisionists allowed the fruits of victory to be taken from them of a guerrilla war fought by hundreds of thousands of men, 300,000 men, forged in that heroic resistance of the European class and peoples that must be taken into account. World War II is therefore an event of great importance. The prestige of the USSR was very high in the world, just look at the newspapers of the time... Thus, Comrade Stalin cannot be accused; that is why the Party says that the Second World War must be understood in this way." (Chairman Gonzalo, First Congress, quoted in the text of the PCB (FR): Uphold the red flag of the Communist International and of its 7th Congress - Problems of the evaluation of the 7th Congress of the Communist International – Comintern").



The PCB(FR) summarizes the results of the Red Army's victory and the advance of the ICM as follows: *“After the end of the Great Patriotic War the imperialist camp found itself profoundly weakened: three major imperialist powers — Germany, Japan, and Italy — were defeated. Other powers such as France and England were partially weakened. In contrast, the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples of the entire world were enormously strengthened. The socialist camp, embracing the people's democracies, expanded and a powerful national liberation movement was greatly expanded.”* (already quoted)



4. MAOISM

4.1. Maoism: the third stage of communist ideology

Maoism is the third stage of the development of Marxism. It encompasses Marxism and Leninism, including the contributions of Stalin — that is, Marxism–Leninism. Maoism is the highest and most complete product of the revolutionary theory and experience of the international proletariat and the ICM.

4.2. The Communist International and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao

The PCB(RF) states: *“The concept of the United Front, based on Marxism-Leninism and the contributions of Comrade Stalin, was able to develop and establish itself in China through successive stages of struggle against the two deviationist lines of the ‘left’ and the right, through the implementation of major campaigns of rectification, up to the grand Seventh Congress of the CPC, held in 1945. During the years of the Second Revolutionary Civil War in China, the CPC committed three “left” deviations that were only corrected at the Tsunyi Conference in January 1935 and in the following ten years, leading up to the holding of its glorious Seventh Congress in 1945. These deviations were in some measure linked to the two-line struggle in the Communist International. The victory of the left in the Chinese Communist Party in 1935 is directly linked to*



the triumph of the left in the Communist International under the leadership of Comrade Stalin.” (...) “The Tsunyi Meeting (January 1935), in which Chairman Mao’s leadership triumphed, represented the overcoming of two opportunistic ‘left’ deviations, which manifested themselves in the attitude of closing the door to the formation of a United Front against the Japanese aggressors. It expressed a precise understanding of the United Front as the application in China of the world anti-fascist front, which was discussed in the Comintern and which would be affirmed by the Seventh Congress of the Communist International” (...) “The Communist International, through its Executive Secretariat, personally directed by Comrade Dimitrov, played an important role in the realization of the Anti-Japanese United Front. When the Xi'an Incident occurred in December 1936, Comrade Dimitrov played an important role in the correct resolution of the conflict. The Secretariat of the Communist International sent a telegram supporting Chairman Mao’s position against that of Wang Ming, who was accused by Comrade Stalin of having provocative positions” (Uphold the Red Flag... quoted).

4.3. Maoism: a high, organic, and complete synthesis of the experience of the Third International

During the great Chinese revolution, Maoism developed and affirmed the most developed synthesis of the entire experience of the Third International and that of the ICM in the years immediately following its dissolution. Only Maoism continued



and developed the line of Marxism, Leninism, and Stalin's contributions of universal value. To separate oneself from Maoism inevitably means falling into one or another revisionist and opportunist tendency of the right or false left. It is therefore not possible to be effectively Marxist and Communist without first and foremost assuming and placing Maoism at the center. Today, the main ideological source of the spread of revisionism and opportunism on an international scale is the rejection of the centrality of Maoism.

4.4. Party, front, and people's army

Chairman Mao organically systematized the three fundamental instruments of revolution and their necessary connection, developing the Marxist-Leninist theory of the party, the front, and the people's army: *"The experience of these eighteen years tells us that the united front and armed struggle are the two fundamental weapons for defeating the enemy. The united front serves to advance the armed struggle. And the Party is the heroic fighter who uses these two weapons to assault and destroy the enemy's positions. Such is the interconnection between the Party, the united front, and the armed struggle."* On the occasion of the appearance of *The Communist*, 1939; *Uphold the Red Flag...* (quoted).

In regard to the theory of the front, Mao highlighted the need for the development of the party's independent initiative 1) for the formation and expansion of the Front; 2) for the disintegration of the influence of the inconsistent, opportunistic, or reactionary



forces of the Front over sectors of the popular masses, through the organization and mobilization of the masses in the revolutionary war on the guidelines and program of the Front; 3) for the development of the Communist Party's initiative outside the front's own policy in preparation for the next stages of the revolutionary struggle, within the framework of the uninterrupted revolutionary process until socialism. On the question of the army, Chairman Mao emphasized that the Communist Party must lead the people's army on the basis of its political line, in accordance with correct military theory. With regard to the Party, Chairman Mao stressed that the leading cadres of the Party must also be leading cadres of the revolutionary front and the people's army. According to Mao, the Communist Party must be the center of everything.

4.5. The theory of people's war

Maoism organically developed the military theory of the proletariat. Already the theories put forward by Lenin during the Revolution of 1905 and the synthesis of the October Revolution — which in its overall course lasted about five years and led to the theorization of operations of strategic importance as an intermediate level between tactics and strategy — pointed in the direction of overcoming the experiences of the French Revolution and the insurrections typical of the nineteenth century. With the development of imperialism and the corresponding transformation of class relations, the problem of proletarian revolutions in fact becomes a question linked to a



relatively prolonged civil war between two sections of the population.

Imperialism had also led to the development of state monopoly capitalism, the oligarchic transformation of the old liberal bourgeois democracy, the intensification of all contradictions on an international scale, and the bureaucratic-military expansion of reactionary state apparatuses, accompanied by the development of a “civil society” serving the reactionary exercise of hegemony over the popular masses. With the end of World War I, in the face of the tendency toward world proletarian revolution, the form of the imperialist state restructured itself, highlighting the underlying tendency, inherent in the domination of finance capital, toward corporatism and fascism. The sharpening of the contradictions of imperialism pushed toward the merging of the struggle for political and trade union rights and for democracy with the proletarian revolution. On this basis, in the face of the advance of reaction and fascism — which sought to save imperialism from crisis and from the tendency toward revolution — the line of uninterrupted revolution emerged with increasing clarity as the path that, by linking the hegemony of the proletariat and its Marxist–Leninist communist parties with anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolutions and with the revolutionary struggle against fascism and imperialism, necessarily advanced toward socialism.

In the wake of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, while in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and in the imperialist countries subjected to Nazi-fascism the strategy of the antifascist people’s democratic revolution was taking shape



— characterized, for the first time in the history of the International Communist Movement, by the explicit adoption of partisan warfare as a form of struggle of strategic importance — in China, under the leadership of Mao, the theory and practice of the New Democratic Revolution developed organically as a stage of the proletarian revolution on the road toward socialism.

It was in the international revolutionary war against bureaucrat-capitalism, fascism, and imperialism that the Maoist theory and practice of people's war developed organically, bringing the military theory of the proletariat to a comprehensive level of development.

Born in the international context of imperialism and the general decomposition of the old liberal state forms, defined by the conception of uninterrupted revolution concerning the structural link between democratic revolution and proletarian revolution, emerging at the center of the world confrontation against Nazi-fascism and imperialism, and developing on the basis of the military theories of Lenin and Stalin, the Maoist theory of people's war — in its organic connection with the theory of the party and the revolutionary front — represented an adequate response, in the general and terminal crisis of the capitalist system, to the attempt of the imperialist system to prolong its survival through offensives against oppressed peoples, reactionary wars, corporativism, and fascism.

The theory of people's war is therefore a great, decisive, and indispensable contribution of Maoism to communist ideology. This is demonstrated by the fact that revisionism and



opportunism either viscerally attack this great proletarian theory or try to take possession of it in order to distort it, empty it of meaning, and reduce it to the erroneous theories that were hegemonic in the revolutionary wing of the groups and movements of the 1970s²⁶.

4.6. Three great historical passages

Maoism did not only represent the highest synthesis of the experience of the Third International and the ICM up to the victory of the Chinese Revolution, but also elevated Marxism-Leninism to a higher stage on all levels. This occurred through further major leaps following the Chinese Revolution.

Maoism carried forward the struggle against modern revisionism²⁷, which had already taken control over the Italian Communist Party, the Communist Party of France, and the Communist Party of USA during World War II and which, after Stalin's death, unleashed the fascist coup that led to the

²⁶From Castroist and focoist conceptions, to those of the economic movementism of *Autonomia Operaia*, to those characterized by political tacticism and militarist subjectivism that developed within the Red Brigades, particularly during the second half of the 1970s.

²⁷*The Differences Between Comrade Togliatti and Us* (Renmin Ribao, December 31, 1962)

<https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sino-soviet-split/cpc/togliatti.htm>; *More On The Differences Between Comrade Togliatti And Us* https://maoism.ws/msw/polemic/tog2_toc.htm; *Leninism Or Social-Imperialism?* <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/china/social-imperialism.pdf>



suppression of the USSR and socialism, developing social imperialism on an international scale, transforming the world's first socialist state into a fascist state and a prison for the peoples of Eastern Europe. On the basis of this struggle, a solid foundation was laid across the world for the subsequent formation of new Marxist-Leninist-Maoist communist parties and for the subsequent Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that began in 1966.

Maoism developed the theory of the affirmation of communism through a series of proletarian cultural revolutions to combat the new revisionist bourgeoisie and its attempts to restore capitalism. In this way, Maoism further developed the theory of proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the construction of socialism.

4.7. The contributions of Maoism to the theory of imperialism

Maoism fought against revisionist theories that reduce the question of state monopoly capitalism to the public form of large monopolies.

Maoism highlighted the link between state monopoly capitalism and fascism, social fascism, modern revisionism, and social imperialism (as in the former USSR after the anti-communist coup following Stalin's death).

Maoism showed that state monopoly capitalism cannot guarantee the reconciliation of class and inter-imperialist contradictions, but rather represents a form of accentuation of



these contradictions. In this sense, Maoism has affirmed, against revisionism and opportunism, that state monopoly capitalism is one aspect and expression of the terminal crisis of imperialism²⁸

In general, Maoism has taken up and developed the theory of the general crisis of capitalism formulated by the Third International in the early 1930s²⁹.

Maoism developed Lenin's theory of imperialism with the formulation of the theory of bureaucrat-capitalism as the result

²⁸ See the following quote: *"The Plenary Session holds that the tremendous victories of the great proletarian cultural revolution have further demonstrated the profound and far-reaching significance of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's theory on continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Mao Tse-tung's thought [Maoism, our note] Marxism-Leninism of the era in which imperialism is heading for total collapse and socialism is advancing to worldwide victory."* (Communique of the Enlarged 12th Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, October 1968)

²⁹ A theory that assigns particular importance to the dynamics of disproportionality among the different sectors of the world economy, and which stands in opposition to collapse theories of capitalism associated with objectivist council communism (represented in particular by Henryk Grossman in *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*, and by the writings of Paul Mattick), as well as to a number of Bordigist currents (represented in Italy by the leadership of Si Cobas–TIR), certain Trotskyist tendencies, and the anti-Marxist theses of the "absolute overproduction of capital" crisis theory adopted by the nPCI and the CARC. On the question of the CARC-nPCI's theory of crisis, see paragraph 12 of Nuova Egeмония relating to the critique of the CARC's 6th Congress, available at the following link: https://nuovaegemonia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/critica_documento_carc_vi_congresso.pdf



of the imperialist system's domination over oppressed peoples. Bureaucrat-capitalism is the form of monopoly capitalism and aborted industrial development that arises in countries subject to imperialist domination on the basis of a backward economy, characterized by the absence of real agrarian revolution and the related permanence and restructuring of pre-capitalist semi-feudal relations. Imperialist oppression and bureaucrat-capitalism require a New Democratic Revolution.

The theory of bureaucrat-capitalism is of decisive importance for the worldwide struggle against revisionism and opportunism, which, on the one hand, overestimate the strength of imperialism and, on the other, propose a directly socialist revolution for the oppressed countries, becoming the bearers of movementist, economistic, reformist, electoralist, frontist, and focoist conceptions.

4.8. The development of the philosophy of dialectical materialism

Maoism affirmed that the philosophy of dialectical materialism is the foundation of revolutionary theory and that, therefore, at the foundation of every theoretical question we find a philosophical question directly connected to the struggle between dialectical materialism and reactionary philosophy.

Maoism affirmed that the core of the question of dialectical materialism lies in the law of the universality of contradiction



and that, therefore, all other laws of dialectics are in reality only particular forms and aspects of this single universal, general, and fundamental law.

The Communist Party of Brazil – CC states in a comprehensive book of exceptional importance for the distinction between Maoism and revisionism: *“Philosophy, as an indispensable part of revolutionary theory, was defined more precisely at each stage in the development of ideology. As a product of this process, in the third stage, Maoism reaches a higher synthesis, the most advanced in terms of the revolutionary content of materialist dialectics. In his works On Practice, On Contradiction (1937), On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (1957), and Where Do Correct Ideas Come From? (1963), as well as in the course of the great philosophical debate within the CCP, which took place between May 1964 and May 1965, around the philosophical principle that everything in the universe is one that divides into two, Chairman Mao, in the midst of the acute class struggle and the two-line struggle, made a great leap forward in the development of Marxist philosophy, both in its formulation and application, as well as in its ability to bring this revolutionary philosophy to the masses and spread it among them. The leap in materialist dialectics brought about by Maoism can be summarized as follows: all processes of matter, that is, of the universe (nature, society, and thought), occur as the development of a unity between two contradictory aspects; the struggle between opposing aspects runs through all processes from beginning to end or until their resolution. (The*



New Democratic Revolution is the main force of the World Proletarian Revolution).

The denial of this principle in the field of dialectical materialism leads to eclecticism, that is, to revisionism. This form of philosophical eclecticism is the general foundation of revisionism with regard to Marxism- Leninism-Maoism and its application and specification.

Eclecticism consists in formally accepting the law of the universality of contradiction and then, contrary to this very law, supporting gradualist conceptions in the name, from time to time, of the supposed primacy of the “transformation of quantity into quality,” the “negation of the negation,” and the “need to consider all aspects of a given situation.”

Eclecticism therefore does not focus on the question of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between revolution and reaction, between Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and revisionism, between the red line and the black line, but on the question of “gaps,” “limitations,” “errors,” the “slow transformation of one thing into another,” “the positive aspects on the one hand and the negative aspects on the other,” “what can be accepted and what must be rejected,” “what unites and what divides.”

Maoism, starting from the universal and fundamental law of the universality of contradiction, developed dialectical materialism from the point of view of the theory of knowledge, logic, and the relationship between philosophical conceptions and social classes.



Maoism has therefore highlighted how in every scientific, theoretical, political, ideological, organizational, military, etc. question, it is essential to start first of all from identifying and understanding the nature of contradiction and to consider everything on the basis of the latter.

4.9. The question of ideological struggle

Maoism, in the course of the people's war of the Chinese revolution, the struggle against modern revisionism, and in particular the great proletarian cultural revolution, developed the question of ideology.

Maoism affirms that all conceptions have a class imprint and character and that class contradictions are reflected in people's ideas.

Class contradictions are reflected in the Maoist party, in its mass organizations, and in its cadres and militants. Contradictions, which are an expression of antagonistic classes, are reflected in the struggle between the red line and the black line and between revolution and reaction. Contradictions that reflect the different components of the people are resolved through struggle, criticism, self-criticism, and transformation.

The party and organizations of the party are areas where cadres and members of the popular masses of mass organizations are transformed and elevated ideologically in accordance with revolutionary practice through processes related to the two-line struggle and the struggle-criticism-transformation.



Maoism attaches great importance to the ideological transformation of militants and members of the popular masses and believes that ideological training and struggle must characterize and permeate all levels of practice and collective and individual life of Maoists and revolutionary mass sectors.

Maoism therefore combats theories that tend to separate political practice from ideological formation and struggle, and which assert that there is a public sphere relating to political initiative and a private sphere in which individual militants and members of the popular masses are free to profess and cultivate their own ideas. With regard to the latter issue, Maoism supports the need for a single worldview for militants and revolutionary masses, applicable to all areas of practice and individual and collective life. In terms of organization and relations with the masses, Maoism combats bureaucracy and styles of managing contradictions based on corporate-managerial concepts.

In general, Maoism rejects all reactionary conceptions and philosophies that support feudal, capitalist, and imperialist points of view.

It fights against fascist, nationalist, and racist ideology, against right-wing and “left-wing” populism, and against post-modern radical-liberal conceptions. It fights against patriarchy, machismo, and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. It opposes the sense of superiority, paternalism, and aristocratism typical of intellectuals, professors, experts, and petty-bourgeois and bourgeois technicians, who generally also constitute the political class of revisionist and opportunist



organizations. With regard to the private lives of militants and members of the popular masses, it opposes a culture that privileges emotions, sensations, and aesthetic form over adequate democratic, progressive, internationalist, and proletarian content. It fights against bourgeois conceptions that promote the separation of feelings and sexuality and that affirm a conception of sexuality linked to competitive and power-based logic. It combats consumerism, waste, and the futile use of income and economic resources among cadres, militants, and the popular masses. It works against antisocial and self-destructive tendencies linked to alcohol and drug addiction. It condemns behavior marked by bullying and other practices of domination and oppression. It generally opposes aspirations for social climbing and identification with lifestyles typical of the lumpen-proletariat and the privileged strata of the intellectual petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie in general.

Maoism promotes, on all levels, the formation of an intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally stable and integrated personality, linked to identification with the interests and living conditions of the proletariat, the popular masses, and oppressed peoples. Maoism promotes collective organization as a place for the training of leading cadres and as a center for the development of the struggle between the black line and the red line and for the transformation of contradictions within the people through processes of development of different subjective contributions, criticism, and self-criticism. It therefore affirms that all militants and advanced members of the popular masses must aspire and aim to become leading cadres. The struggle,



ideological training, and transformation of militants and advanced elements of the masses must take place in collective life and revolutionary practice in accordance with the interests of the masses, the revolution, and a radical change in the politics and economy of society on the road to socialism and communism. Without carrying out the struggle against revisionism, opportunism, and the black line to the end, and without promoting real Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideological training, it is not possible to build the revolutionary party of the proletariat and to wage and lead the people's war to victory.

5. THE UNIVERSAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRESIDENT GONZALO



5.1. Universal contributions relating to the definition of Maoism

Starting from the preparation and launching of the great people's war in Peru guided by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Gonzalo Thought, Chairman Gonzalo led an international battle of historic importance against revisionism and opportunism for the affirmation of Maoism as the guiding ideology of the world proletarian revolution.

Gonzalo Thought is the unity between the universal contributions made to the battle for the affirmation of Maoism



as the ideology of the world proletarian revolution and the guiding Thought of the Peruvian proletarian revolution. It is therefore necessary to assume the universal contributions of his Thought and carefully study the parts specifically related to the guiding Thought of the Peruvian revolution. In general, it is necessary to support and affirm the formula “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism with the universal contributions of Gonzalo Thought.” In this sense, the definition “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-principally Maoism” is correct and adequate.

The principal universal contribution of Chairman Gonzalo was that of defining Maoism in relation to the struggle for the affirmation of Leninism and for the Bolshevization of the Communist Parties adhering to the Third International, thereby playing a role similar to that of the great Comrade Stalin. The historic struggle for the affirmation of this definition was carried out on the international level and led, over several decades, to the formation and unification of various Maoist forces within the International Communist League.

This historic struggle passed, in its first phase, through the experience of the RIM (Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, formed in 1984) in the struggle against the revisionist deviations of Avakian and Prachanda and created more advanced subjective conditions. In a later phase, following the dissolution of the RIM (caused by the influence of these revisionist tendencies), Maoists continued this struggle against the black line within the international Marxist–Leninist movement, represented by opportunist positions of the false “left” and of the right, heirs of Avakian and Prachanda and



characterized philosophically by the influence of postmodernism.

Chairman Gonzalo defined that:

- 1) Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is a unity characterized by three stages related to the qualitative development of Maoism, among which today it is decisive to affirm Maoism;
- 2) the law of contradiction is the only universal law of materialist dialectics, which encompasses all other aspects of dialectics as forms, articulations, or particular cases;
- 3) all human conceptions have a class imprint and therefore proletarian ideology concerns everything and the struggle for the affirmation of this ideology permeates everything and all individual and collective subjects who refer to class struggle, revolution, and communism;
- 4) the masses make history and therefore it is necessary to learn from the masses and place oneself at their service, to combat idealism, subjectivism, aristocratism, paternalism, intellectualistic, academic, and culturalist approaches;
- 5) The revolutionary violence of the masses is omnipotent, in the sense that it is the highest expression of class struggle and that imperialism, the bourgeoisie, and other reactionary classes are inevitably destined to succumb to the revolutionary war of the masses;
- 6) Revolution is the main tendency in the general crisis of the imperialist system, which has taken on a terminal character; the main component of the world proletarian revolution is



represented by the struggle of the peoples oppressed by U.S, Russian, Chinese, and European imperialism; the peoples oppressed by imperialism constitute the majority of the countries of the world;

7) The military theory of the proletariat developed by Maoism during the Chinese revolution is the highest expression and the most organic and comprehensive synthesis of the military theories of Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, and the revolutionary experience of the Third International, including the war against Nazi-fascism, the anti-fascist national liberation wars, and the establishment of people's democracies in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This theory includes: (a) the conception of revolution as a long-term process during which the reactionary state is destroyed and the new state is established; the process of building the New State is expressed in the formation of the red bases of the revolution; (b) the necessary relationship between the party, the front, and the army during the revolutionary process; the party-front-people's army have unified leadership; the front consists of the alliance of the revolutionary classes under the hegemony of the proletariat and is expressed in the formation of the structure of the New State; (c) the revolution as a whole, from its beginning to its conclusion, is characterized by offensive, but this offensive in a general sense can be divided into three phases, the initial phase being represented by strategic defense, the central phase by strategic equilibrium, and the final phase by strategic offensive action; in the first phase, the strategic defense of the proletariat develops in the struggle against the strategic offensive of the enemy; in the last phase,



following the breakdown of the balance of forces in the field, the strategic offensive of the proletariat is opposed by the reactionary defense; (d) has a strategic character and develops in the initial phase through the combination of molecular guerrilla initiative and molar operations of strategic importance; in subsequent phases it also assumes forms of positional and especially of maneuver warfare.

8) The theory of people's war is universally valid; the rejection of this principle in any country inevitably leads to opportunism.

9) In socialist countries, the construction of socialism progresses through class struggle and opposition to attempts to restore capitalism; to achieve communism, a series of Proletarian Cultural Revolutions and people's wars are necessary;

10) The majority of countries in the world are oppressed by American, Russian, Chinese imperialism and by those of the major European countries. In these countries, a particular form of capitalism develops, namely bureaucrat-capitalism. "Bureaucrat-capitalism" is characterized by the fusion of large public and private monopolies linked to the state and directly or indirectly subordinate to imperialism, but distinguished by a weak or almost non-existent capitalist-industrial base; This form of capitalism characterizes backward capitalist countries that, due to imperialist oppression, have been unable to complete the bourgeois revolution and the transformation of feudal agrarian relations into capitalist ones.



5.2. Further contributions of universal value made by Chairman Gonzalo

Chairman Gonzalo also addressed some issues related to Maoism, making some new contributions of universal value:

1) the International Communist Movement must unify on a shared ideological basis defined above all by Maoism; Maoism is the guide of the world proletarian revolution;

2) the party is formed on the basis of the specification of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism within the reality of each country; the specification of Maoism leads to the formation of the specific thought that characterizes the leadership of the party and guides the revolution in each country; once the party has been formed, its effective construction takes place in the course of the revolutionary process;

3) The construction of the party, the front, and the people's army must proceed from the center represented by the party, through the progressive incorporation of ever broader sectors of the masses; the communist party is militarized³⁰ insofar as it

³⁰ The theory of the militarized communist party, both in relation to the revolutionary process and to the continuation of socialism, is therefore profoundly different from—and even opposed to—the theories of the “combatant party” present in the revolutionary movement of the 1970s. It is based on the principle of the progressive incorporation of ever broader sectors of the proletariat and the popular masses, which, in the process of socialist construction, tend to become “armed popular masses.” By contrast, the theories of the “combatant party” of the 1970s rejected from the outset the principle of incorporating the popular masses, proposing armed initiative as



represents a political-hegemonic bloc, led by the proletariat and based on the alliance between the revolutionary classes, characterized by a structure based on the materialization and mobilization of the armed force of the masses;

4) the militarized communist party operates not only in the proletarian revolution, but also assumes a central and decisive role in the class struggle in socialism and in repelling attempts to restore capitalism through proletarian cultural revolutions and people's wars;

5) bureaucrat-capitalism and, in general, state monopoly capitalism (which includes public monopolies and private monopolies linked to the state) tend toward fascism; fascism is characterized by the absence, emptying, or suppression of democratic systems and by the development and affirmation of a corporative management of the state and society; it is therefore not necessarily characterized by the exercise of open and direct violence³¹.

a political instrument (the theory of “making politics with arms”) aimed at intervening in inter-bourgeois contradictions with the illusion of influencing them, as clearly illustrated by the Moro affair or, in a different form but according to a similar logic, by the cases of Biagi, D’Antona, Tarantelli, and others. Hence the appropriateness of the metaphorical formula “armed Menshevism” to describe this type of politician approach, referring to the use that the Mensheviks believed they could make—after the 1905 Revolution—of counter-revolutionary liberals, assuming they could exploit the contradictions between liberals and the Tsarist regime in order to bring about the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

³¹ The commonly used category of the “police state” refers to an essential component of fascism, which—particularly in its most critical phase—may assume an openly terrorist and genocidal character (as clearly demonstrated



5.3. Studying the specific experience of the Peruvian revolution

It is not yet possible to determine whether Gonzalo Thought — which combines elements of universal value with elements specific to the Peruvian revolution — contains further contributions of universal significance. Only the study of the Peruvian revolution and the development of the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution on a world scale can provide an answer to this question.

5.4. Continuation and development of Chairman Gonzalo's work

Given the international importance of the universal contributions of Chairman Gonzalo and of his historic struggle for the affirmation of Maoism as the guide of the world proletarian revolution, the significance of the decade-long work of the Unified Maoist International Conference and its outcome — the formation of the International Communist League — must be upheld.

by Italian fascism and Nazism).

6. THE THOUGHT OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI



6.1. The immortal figure of Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci was born on January 22, 1891, in Ales, Sardinia, and died on April 27, 1937, in Rome. His death was caused by the Fascist regime. Gramsci died as a result of his long imprisonment and the lack of adequate medical care for his increasingly severe health conditions. It was a slow murder, an unprecedented crime committed against the Italian and international proletariat. Gramsci, the de facto founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCd'I), was the greatest Italian Marxist-Leninist, a leading figure of the proletariat, a revolutionary cadre of the highest rank, who developed a specific ideology—“Gramsci’s Thought”—for the proletarian revolution in our country.



6.2. Resuming Gramsci's path on the basis of Maoism

It is necessary to adopt Gramsci's Thought, which must be understood as the expression of the specification of Marxism–Leninism of the Third International within the Italian context. Through this specification, Gramsci developed contributions that make it possible to regard his Thought as an intermediate link on the path of the development of Marxism–Leninism into Marxism–Leninism–Maoism. Gramsci's Thought therefore does not merely consist in the application of Marxism–Leninism to the Italian context, but also represents a body of thought that contains elements anticipating Maoism. Although these elements are relative and partial, their great importance lies in the fact that they facilitate the specification of Maoism that is necessary today in relation to the Italian context. In summary, this leads to affirming the need to rebuild the Communist Party of Italy by resuming Gramsci's path on the basis of Maoism.

6.3. Right and "left" revisionism against Gramsci

Gramsci had Lenin's full support during the period of *L'Ordine Nuovo* and the Third Communist International. The Italian Communist Party (PCd'I) was formally constituted in 1921 under the leadership of the Bordigists as a result of the split in the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). Gramsci was the only representative of *L'Ordine Nuovo* in the Central Committee of the PCd'I. Bordigism was an expression of a form of



mechanistic, maximalist, and “left-wing” extremism, with various themes and basic theses very similar to those of Trotskyism. In particular, it opposed the valorization, in the course of the class struggle, of the peasants and of other sectors of the exploited and oppressed petty bourgeoisie. It stood in opposition to Gramsci’s line of a revolutionary worker–peasant government and to the recognition of the decisive role played in Italy by the Southern and Islands Question.

During the movement — appreciated by Lenin himself — of the *Arditi del Popolo*, which organized forms of resistance and armed struggle against fascist forces, the Bordigists pursued a sectarian initiative and worked as much as possible to prevent communist participation in that movement.

Gramsci’s firm opposition to Bordigism and Trotskyism, as well as to other revisionist and opportunist tendencies, combined with the enormous prestige he enjoyed among revolutionary workers and peasants, together with the strong and decisive support of the Third International, led to the complete defeat of the Bordigist clique at the Lyon Congress in January 1926. At the Sixth Enlarged Executive Committee of the Third International, in the session of February 22, 1926, Bordiga himself clashed with Stalin, openly siding with Trotsky’s positions. It can therefore be argued that the real formation of the Communist Party of Italy as an effectively communist party and already, at least in tendency bolshevized, was represented by Gramsci’s rise to the leadership of the party in August 1924.



In November 1926, Gramsci was imprisoned by the fascist regime, which effectively sought to kill him slowly, depriving him of the necessary medical care, until he died in April 1937. In the PCI, following Gramsci's arrest, Togliatti's leadership group began to emerge and assert itself.

It is well known that Gramsci's planned move into hiding, which had been decided and planned several times, was repeatedly hindered by dubious and obscure organizational problems³². It is equally well known that Togliatti's group worked to hinder the negotiations that were underway, with the intervention of the USSR, to achieve an exchange of high-level prisoners and secure Gramsci's release and transfer to the USSR.

Gramsci himself raised doubts and criticisms about all this in coded form, particularly in the paragraphs of Notebook No. 4 dedicated to the famous Tenth Canto of *Dante's Inferno*. Stalin and Dimitrov considered Togliatti and his leadership group to be unreliable, partly as a result of previous communications sent by Gramsci. During his imprisonment, Gramsci's criticism of what could be defined as semi-Trotskyist positions—such as opposition to the revolutionary constituent assembly of workers and peasants, denial of the role of the peasantry and of the Southern Question, the theory of fascism as a mass reactionary system, and so on—which essentially concerned the analysis

³² The right-opportunist group of the CARC-nPCI, which liquidates Marxism–Leninism–Maoism, shamefully attributes this setback to supposed ideological limitations in Gramsci's own conceptions.



and evaluation of fascism and the strategy for revolution and the advance towards socialism.

With the Allied landing in Sicily, Togliatti and his leadership group came to believe that it was no longer possible to link the struggle to overthrow fascism to the revolution led by the proletariat. With the Salerno turning point, Togliatti's PCI became an organically revisionist party, which made a decisive contribution to the pacification of the revolutionary process represented by the anti-fascist partisan war, with the consequent affirmation of a false bourgeois democracy³³.

The Constitution was promoted by the PCI as a historic break, the basis for a new state and the starting point for the overall transformation of Italian society and economy. It was in this context that Togliatti developed a plan to revise Gramsci's Thought, with the aim of presenting him as an ideologue and great intellectual who had prepared the revisionist turn and transformation of the PCI. This operation, carried forward by thousands of intellectuals and cadres of the PCI, continued for several decades and assumed international dimensions.

From the end of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s — particularly after the 20th Congress of the CPSU, which sanctioned the full affirmation of modern revisionism and social-imperialism with the corresponding capitalist restoration — a number of intellectuals who, after serving their

³³ On this subject, see the Nuova Egemonia pamphlet *I NIPOTINI HOXHAISTI DI TOGLIATTI* (*The Hoxhaist Grandchildren of Togliatti*) <https://nuovaegemonia.com/2024/12/04/i-nipotini-hoxhaisti-di-togliatti/>



apprenticeship within fascist ranks, had later moved to the PSI and PCI began to adopt critical positions toward these two parties. These former Gentilian intellectuals, together with other revisionist and left social-democratic intellectuals often close to councilism, Bordigism, and Trotskyism, came to form the New Left, from which—toward the end of the 1950s—emerged the tendency represented by operaismo (workerism), which would later become hegemonic among many political groups in the following decades.

Although within the New Left and the ranks of workerism Gramsci was often directly attacked as a “left Crocean,” more sophisticated approaches were also present. In these cases, Gramsci’s Thought was split and fragmented. Attempts were made to distinguish a supposed workerist Gramsci linked to the experience of the factory councils from the “intellectual Gramsci” associated instead with the *Prison Notebooks*. There were also positions that — starting from the left wing of the Christian Democracy (DC) and particularly from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) — attempted to appropriate themes such as hegemony, education, the war of position, the moral and intellectual reform, and others. More generally, it can be observed that in Italy there has hardly been any major political party that has not, at some point and in various forms, attempted to appropriate one or another of Gramsci’s theoretical contributions.

On the international level as well, the distortion of Gramsci’s Thought was by no means limited to the forces of modern revisionism or those directly descended from it, but extended to



various fields and sectors of the so-called “Marxist” intelligentsia. Here Gramsci was used and distorted — in the service of reformism and movementism — by tendencies ranging from so-called “critical Marxism” to postmodernism.

6.4. Reclaiming Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks

The *Prison Notebooks*³⁴ represent a monumental Marxist-Leninist work, profoundly unified and organic, in which Gramsci completes, on all levels, from the point of view of

³⁴ “*The Prison Notebooks are his principal work. It is a monumental undertaking. Gramsci speaks about it in a letter to Tania dated March 19, 1927. In relation to his plan of work, he states that he intends to produce something für ewig, literally translated as ‘forever,’ that is, ‘for posterity.’ Gramsci was thinking of a work for ‘posterity,’ for those who would come after him. It is important to bear all this in mind: Gramsci intended to write the Notebooks with a view to a long-term project of a strategic character, and therefore of great importance for the development of the organization and the revolutionary struggle of the Italian proletariat. This concerns the question of building the Communist Party. More precisely, it can be argued that in the Notebooks Gramsci worked on the question of building an organically ‘Bolshevik’ party—a party of a new type, a Marxist-Leninist party for the revolution in our country. In this sense, it is not sufficient to claim that Gramsci simply worked on the construction of the communist party. Gramsci did something more specific and decisive. He worked toward a precise orientation for such a construction, aiming to establish his Thought as the guiding thought of the communist party—for a Marxist-Leninist party with a definite Gramscian orientation. This is why today it is, in a certain sense, unavoidable to reconnect with his Thought in order to build the party that is now necessary.*”

(Interview with Nuova Egemonia on the project “Gramsci 50 online meetings,” <https://nuovaegemonia.com/2022/12/05/intervista-a-nuovaegemonia-sul-progetto-gramsci-50-incontri-online/>).



theoretical elaboration, the ideological basis for the formation of the Communist Party of Italy and the specific thinking of the proletarian revolution in Italy.

It is Gramsci and no one else who provides a Marxist-Leninist theoretical framework which, in its essential lines, offers a comprehensive understanding of the historical, economic, political, and cultural reality of several millennia of the kind of nation³⁵ that gradually came into being—partly in a bureaucratic-reactionary and thus formal and artificial manner—during the *Risorgimento* (*Resurgence in en.*), that is, the pseudo-liberal revolution that culminated in 1861, with with a partly rhetorical epilogue in the capture of Rome in 1871.

The *Prison Notebooks* not only require a certain knowledge of Italian historical and social context and are therefore difficult even for Marxists (Marxist-Leninists or Maoists) from other countries, who may easily misunderstand them, but they are also a great theoretical work that only those who really want to form the Communist Party for the proletarian revolution in Italy can

³⁵ “It may not be immediately clear what it means to speak of ‘Italian reality.’ The ‘Italian reality’ of the ‘past’? That of the time when Gramsci himself was writing his Notebooks? Of the past and the present considered together, simultaneously? The question must be addressed on a theoretical level, and it is far from simple. First of all, one must start from the fact that, if it is true that on the one hand this ‘reality’ refers to millennia of history, evolution, and development, on the other hand—and this is something Gramsci repeatedly emphasizes—it only begins to take shape with the Risorgimento period, and therefore dates back, more or less, only a few centuries.” (Interview with *Nuova Egemonia*, cited)



assimilate and fully grasp³⁶. Gramsci also wrote this work under the watchful eye of fascist censorship, which hoped to use it for its own purposes in order to instrumentally revitalize its suffocating and artificial ideological-cultural production.

How does he write it in terms of formal exposition? Gramsci divides the exposition of the categories and their connections into long series of paragraphs that often have titles and internal developments that do not appear to correspond, or whose correspondence is only formal. In other words, it is necessary to study all the Notebooks in order to reconstruct Gramsci's thought. The order of the exposition of the various notebooks and paragraphs is therefore of only relative importance. All this means that such a reconstruction can only be carried out from a genuinely revolutionary and proletarian standpoint. In essence, even opportunists are effectively excluded from such an approach.

³⁶ “If Gramsci encoded his work with a precise intent in relation to the struggle against fascism and Togliattian opportunism, the question that naturally arises is who, in his expectations, was meant to undertake the task of decoding it. Gramsci provides us with some indications. First of all, he tells us that what matters is the ‘leitmotiv’—that is, the essential point—and that a whole series of paragraphs are not relevant. He also suggests that an entire group of high-level cadres should have worked for several years on his *Notebooks*—he implies this when speaking about Croce, but he does so quite clearly. What kind of cadres, then? This is the problem! Marxist-Leninist cadres, cadres engaged in building the party. The general conclusion we must draw, therefore, is that no one has yet truly understood Gramsci.” (Interview with *Nuova Egemonia*, cited)



Assimilating Gramsci's thought, reconnecting the thread of his work with the formation of the party, is ultimately impossible without taking Maoism as both a basis and an ideological guide. *"We had a first qualitative leap: from Marx we moved on to Lenin, then a second stage, where we moved on from Lenin to Mao. No one decided this. It was an objective process related to the development and advancement of the world proletarian revolution. In the days of Stalin or Gramsci, we could not really study and understand Marxism without starting from Lenin. We must always start from the most developed stage, especially from this stage, but we must be careful with this 'especially'. This does not mean that Marx must at some point be set aside, as this would be a way of undermining Marxism-Leninism at its foundations, of removing the basis on which it was able to develop. So let us return to Gramsci. [After Gramsci's death] the revolutionary experience of the international proletariat developed, the ICM developed, and the class struggle in Italy itself developed. A whole series of issues took a certain course, a whole other series of issues arose, were addressed, and resolved. The theory of M-L developed in the course of the existence and practice of the Third International, the struggle for liberation from Nazi-fascism, the experiences of the uninterrupted revolution and the formation of people's democracies, a new and different form of the dictatorship of the proletariat based mainly on the front and not on councils, and, in particular, of the great Chinese revolution, the struggle against modern revisionism, and in the course of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In short, a new stage of Marxism has appeared, a stage beyond that of Marxism-*



Leninism, that of Maoism. Understanding Gramsci, decoding him, cannot be reduced to an abstract, intellectualistic operation. One cannot study and decode Gramsci without starting from the highest point achieved by Marxism, namely Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. This is inherent in the fact that today we cannot find a purely Marxist-Leninist standpoint capable of decoding Gramsci on the exclusive basis of the Marxism-Leninism of the 1930s. We cannot turn back the wheel of history; we cannot return to the 1930s” (Interview with Nuova Egemonia, quoted).

Finally, if Gramsci’s thought can only be assimilated and truly understood from a revolutionary and effectively proletarian point of view, this point of view is comprehensive and necessarily both theoretical and practical, and therefore linked to and aimed at practice. In essence, only in the course of the struggle for the formation and construction of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party—through the struggle against revisionism, opportunism, and the black line within the forces that claim to adhere to Maoism—can it be established, within the progressive definition of the specific thought required today for the revolution in Italy, what Gramsci’s thought truly is.

6.5. The theory of “Passive Revolution”

According to Gramsci “passive revolution” represents a reactionary attempt by the ruling classes to resolve — in opposition to the tendency toward revolution — a fundamental crisis concerning certain key contradictions or ‘questions’ within



a society in transition³⁷. The “passive revolution” appears as an attempt to avoid, interrupt, or defeat — at least for a certain period — the revolutionary path through processes of reform and reactionary restructuring aimed at prolonging existing economic, social, and state relations. A “passive revolution” involves not only the level of the economy but also that of politics, mobilization and repressive state action, and culture, and reflects the fact that the historically more progressive class is capable of carrying forward a revolution aimed at establishing new economic and state relations.

According to Gramsci, “passive revolution” differs from the counter-revolution, which aims merely to perpetuate or restore an existing situation. Gramsci distinguishes between “passive revolutions” that, in a partial and contradictory manner, succeed in resolving certain historical problems and knots and in producing real transformations (while thereby preparing new and more acute contradictions), and “passive revolutions” that, although producing even significant changes in the situation and in economic and state relations, do not alter their fundamental character and therefore fail—even temporarily—to bring about structural change.

³⁷ In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci addresses this question in relation to the transition to the phase of feudal absolutism, the transition to capitalism and the liberal revolution, and the phase of decline and crisis of imperialism, distinguishing between the European case—particularly that of Italy—and that of “Americanism.”



Gramsci developed this theory by studying various phases of Italian history on the basis of the relationship between social classes, the state superstructure, and ideologies. This theory originates from Lenin's approach to the problem of revolution in Russia after 1905. Lenin argued—against the so-called 'liquidators'—that the revolution had not been defeated but was continuing in a zigzag development, and that the attempts of tsarism and the liberal bourgeoisie to resolve the key contradictions involved in the transition to capitalism were destined to fail. In addition to a series of structural contradictions, Lenin also pointed to the question of the presence of Bolshevism and therefore of the related level of consciousness and organization of the proletariat, highlighting the opportunistic character of Menshevik positions, which rigidly separated the objective and subjective conditions of the revolution³⁸.

Gramsci applies the theory of "passive revolution" to the study of the phase relating to the "liberal revolution" in Italy, known as the *Risorgimento*, and shows how this "revolution" was in fact a failed and incomplete revolution and how, as a result, historical issues (which he defined as 'Questioni') became condensed and were perpetuated over time, albeit in forms characterized by reactionary reforms and restructuring of various kinds. These are

³⁸ Lenin demonstrated how subjective conditions, in turn, played a decisive role in determining the failure of attempts to resolve the crisis of Russian society without revolution—attempts that Gramsci would later define as "passive-revolutionary."



fundamental issues of the proletarian revolution that continue to arise today in particularly acute forms. Gramsci also applied the theory of “passive revolution” to the question of Italian imperialism, highlighting how Mussolini’s fascism in Italy attempted to address the general crisis of imperialism in a very different way from the imperialist path that characterized the United States at the time. In Italy, fascism sought to modernize capitalism without suppressing the feudal relations present in a significant part of the country, but rather by accentuating the oppression and exploitation of the peasant masses and supporting the parasitic land rent that thus constituted a pillar of the dominant reactionary bloc. While the US, faced with the onset of the crisis in the late 1920s, was able to carry out a momentarily ‘successful’ ‘passive revolution,’ the opposite was happening in Italy, where fascism itself, which in the final analysis presented itself as an anti-proletarian and anti-popular “passive revolution,” did nothing but work to develop the conditions for the proletarian revolution.

Gramsci was also a profound scholar and expert, not only on the situation in various Latin American countries, but also in China. Gramsci’s comparison between these countries and the South, which is part of his elaboration on the Southern Question, contains important embryonic elements (according to Chairman Gonzalo, this was also the case in the work of José Carlos Mariátegui) of the Maoist theory of “bureaucrat-capitalism.” In Gramsci’s case, these elements refer to his vision of the “passive revolution” as an attempt to overcome the tendency towards revolution which, under certain economic and political



conditions — such as those represented by the Southern Question — Gramsci himself considered destined to fail.

6.6. Gramsci, imperialism, and the proletarian revolution

For Gramsci, imperialism is characterized by an ‘organic crisis’ comparable to the prolonged decomposition of feudalism. Such a crisis, potentially lasting for centuries, indicates that the conditions for the proletarian revolution³⁹ are mature. In an attempt to overcome the tendency towards “proletarian revolution” and thus prolong its existence, imperialism goes on the offensive and puts forward a “passive revolution” whose fundamental limit lies in the impossibility of resolving growing class contradictions through a planned economy, the growing

³⁹ One of the theories advanced by the CARC (which, in their “bible,” the *Programmatic Manifesto of the nPCI*, even display the image of Gramsci himself) is that Gramsci’s Thought is deficient in its contribution to Marxist-Leninist economic analysis and theory. This constitutes a covert revival of the accusations of culturalism and idealism directed at Gramsci by the Bordigists. The approach of the CARC–nPCI to Gramsci thus represents an application of the conception and method of postmodernism. Rather than directly criticizing specific theses, they seek to neutralize them precisely at the moment when they attempt to appropriate them for their own political purposes.



class contradictions that arise from private ownership of the means of production and the extraction of surplus value.

At the political-state level under imperialism, the “passive revolution” presents itself as the affirmation of a reactionary and corporatist form of state order based on the liquidation of nineteenth-century liberal-democratic forms. Within this framework, the passive revolution also appears as a reflection of a profound hegemonic crisis of the state, and therefore as an attempt to alternate between phases—of varying duration—characterized by a reactionary, semi-fascist liberalism (possibly accompanied by the presence of modern revisionism or social democracy), and phases marked by a regime which, whether or not it maintains a parliamentary system, is more openly repressive or police-driven.

In this regard, Gramsci defines as fascism what is commonly described—especially in journalistic language and among opportunist far-left groups—as a ‘police state.’ In this sense, Gramsci distinguishes fascism as a form of passive revolution from the regime of open political and military counterrevolution, which may represent only its extreme form. This latter form is characterized by the failure of the passive revolution itself and therefore constitutes the last resort of reaction, which, in principle, can be rapidly swept away by the proletarian revolution.

On the political-ideological level—and therefore on that of reactionary philosophy, as a complementary dimension of passive revolution—imperialism tends to reconcile the



“reactionary thesis” with the “revolutionary antithesis” in order ultimately to defeat the latter. Hence its relationship not only with reactionary liberalism and modern revisionism, but also with populism, fascism, and red-brownism which, as emphasized not only by Gramsci himself but also by Mariátegui and Chairman Gonzalo, present themselves as chameleon-like, eclectic, and pragmatist visions aimed at defeating the tendency toward revolution by temporarily absorbing—demagogically and manipulatively—certain immediate demands and reformist or economic and trade-union demands of the popular masses.

6.7. Gramsci and the “war of position”

6.7.1. The revisionist interpretation of the category of “war of position”

Togliatti’s revisionism and later various so-called “communist” groups and small parties have attempted to present Gramsci’s theory of “war of position” as an expression of a reformist, culturalist, and electoralist vision of the political initiative of the communist party, aimed at a gradual conquest of the organs of the state superstructure or, more precisely, of so-called “civil society.” In this way, they attempted to transform Gramsci into a left-wing Crocean thinker, a theorist of “passive revolution” as a strategy for the democratization of the reactionary state and for the progressive, essentially peaceful advance towards socialism.



6.7.2. The “War of Siege”

Gramsci’s theory of the war of position is a conception of class relations and of the character of the modern state within the framework of the organic crisis of capitalist society, of class relations and of the character of the modern state, with particular reference to the Italian situation. The fundamental issue is that of the reactionary offensive that confronts the tendency toward proletarian revolution. This offensive is metaphorically represented by Gramsci as a siege, but he immediately clarifies that “the siege is reciprocal.” This thesis is very similar to the Maoist conception according to which revolution advances by confronting an initially stronger enemy in a long-term process beginning from the strategic defensive. The category of the war of position thus indicates a general configuration of relations between the classes in imperialist countries—and particularly in Italy—with respect to the role of the state as a machine of repression and domination of the bourgeoisie. In this sense it also indicates the general dynamic—resulting from the development of proletarian and the popular masses initiative led by the communist party—through which this configuration is transformed into a war of movement, that is, into civil war and proletarian revolution.

6.7.3. The proletarian hegemonic front

Gramsci’s category of the war of position also refers to the question of the specific nature of proletarian initiative within the framework of the “reciprocal siege.” According to Gramsci, the Communist party can adequately respond to the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie only if it recognizes the necessity of



hegemony, that is, only if the communist party builds a revolutionary political front that takes the form of a popular bloc under proletarian hegemony. For Gramsci, the question of the revolutionary front is closely linked to the conception of the proletarian revolution as characterized by the initiative of an alliance of classes comprising, in addition to the proletariat, the exploited and oppressed strata of the petty bourgeoisie (particularly the peasantry). In the sense of a revolutionary popular front or bloc with proletarian hegemony, the proletariat's war of position accompanies the entire revolutionary process and continues in modified forms during socialism and the transition to communism.

6.7.4. The disintegration of the bourgeois forces

Gramsci further develops the question of the front in line with the Third Congress of the Communist International and with the subsequent experience of the ICM. The worker–peasant bloc—that is, the front of revolutionary classes under proletarian hegemony—when it seeks to advance the revolutionary struggle against fascism, also becomes the basis for the formation of a broader political alignment that may include opportunist forces and even bourgeois political forces which in that context present themselves as “democratic” and “antifascist.”

Gramsci's line on the question of the *Arditi del Popolo* (*lit.* ‘*The People's Daring Ones*’) and, in 1924, on the opposition's proposal for an “Anti-parliament” accompanied by the



mobilization of the proletariat and the popular masses⁴⁰ is therefore masterful. Gramsci also emphasizes the importance of

⁴⁰ The abysmal difference stands out between the Gramscian approach to the question of the united front with opportunist and bourgeois “anti-fascist” forces (aimed at disintegrating their influence and accelerating the transformation of the hegemonic crisis of the bourgeois state into a revolutionary process) and the opportunist and revisionist approaches of a frontist type. In the case of Togliattian revisionism, the policy of a united front with so-called “anti-fascist” bourgeois forces (DC, PSI, etc.) clearly made a decisive contribution to passive revolution, which led to the interruption and regression of the Resistance—that is, of the people’s democratic and anti-fascist revolution on the road to socialism. A similarly liquidating outcome also occurred in the 1970s. In this case, the tacticism of opportunist groups linked to slogans such as “government of the left,” “popular front government,” “workers’ government,” and so on, translated into de facto support for the reactionary policies of the PCI. On the opposite side, that of the BR revolutionaries, a deviation not very different in nature emerged: that of armed initiative against a supposed “heart of the State,” interpreted in an anti-Marxist sense as the condensation of a system of unstable inter-bourgeois equilibria, as the basis for a presumed split within the bourgeois front and thus for the opening of a supposed revolutionary dynamic. In this case as well, the result was paradoxically to end up as the extreme-left tail of the bourgeoisie (from the left wing of factory councils in the hands of opportunist trade-union forces, to the many liberal-radical and reformist supporters of the “government of the left,” etc.). Today, revisionist conceptions of front policy continue to reappear: from Rifondazione, which speaks of an “anti-fascist front with the PD,” to the blocs of the radical left in various electoral rounds, up to the “people’s bloc government” of the CARC–nPCI, which is supposed—almost by miracle—to catalyze and concentrate the initiative of opportunist groups, the trade-union left, rank-and-file unionism, and opposition movements. A policy of the front on a revolutionary basis is impossible without a communist party capable of leading a real worker–popular bloc that can be actively mobilized so as to exert increasing pressure on bourgeois and opportunist political and trade-union forces, in order to promote and accelerate their catastrophic disintegration. Therefore, the prerequisites for a revolutionary front policy with bourgeois and opportunist “anti-fascist” forces are the development of the communist party and the



the independent initiative of the popular bloc under proletarian hegemony directed by the communist party within the front policy toward bourgeois and opportunist forces. The aim of this initiative is to disintegrate their mass influence among sections of the proletariat and the popular masses. Thus, the policy of a front with bourgeois and opportunist “antifascist” forces represents another dimension of the proletarian concept of the war of position.

In the sense of the anti-fascist front with bourgeois and opportunist forces, this war of position ceases when the proletariat achieves complete hegemony in the front, based on the disintegration of the influence, among the proletarian and popular masses, of the opportunist “anti-fascist” forces that had been present within it until that moment.

6.7.5. War of position and war of movement

While revisionists and opportunists have tried to pass off the “war of position” waged by an effective communist party as a peaceful struggle for consensus on the political, trade union, and cultural levels, it becomes clear that, for Gramsci, “war of position” and “war of movement” are only different dimensions of the revolutionary process. It is no coincidence that Gramsci

formation—even if only embryonic—of the worker-popular bloc, that is, of the revolutionary front capable of real, autonomous, and independent initiative alongside the “front policy,” and, where appropriate, also within its framework.



also speaks in this regard of “mixed war”⁴¹ in some paragraphs of great interest relating to national liberation wars against imperialism. The Gramscian conception of the war of position and of its relation to the war of movement later found powerful confirmation—after the period in which the *Prison Notebooks* were written—in the experience of the Spanish Civil War and in the heroic communist guerrilla struggle that followed the victory of Francoism, in the historic Seventh Congress of the Communist International, in the antifascist resistance in Italy, and in the revolutionary experiences of People’s Democracy in the Balkans and in the countries of Eastern Europe.

⁴¹ Gramsci’s approach to the question of “mixed war,” in relation to the specific conditions of Italy (the Southern and Islands Question; marginal imperialism; the absence of a real break with the fascist regime, which largely recycled itself, after World War II, within the reactionary “constitutional” state, etc.), can be summarized by the formula of the strategy of the people’s democratic revolution on the road to socialism. This strategy was first attacked “from the left” by the semi-Trotskyist leadership group of the PCI under Togliatti, which held that, with the defeat of fascism, it was necessary to proceed directly to a socialist revolution. It was then deformed and distorted in a reformist and reactionary sense beginning with the Salerno Turning point, which inaugurated the line of national collaboration, including a broad component of the former Mussolini regime, for the construction of the “Constitutional Republican State.” Subsequently, it has consistently been opposed—not only by revisionism, but also by right and “left”-opportunism, by “left communism” (Trotskyism, Bordigism, council communism, etc.), by workerism, by the armed organizations of the 1970s, by anti-Maoist Marxist-Leninists, and by proponents of “Marxism–Leninism–Maoism” on an eclectic basis.



6.8. Gramsci and the struggle for hegemony: the construction of the revolutionary bloc

In his assessment of the *Biennio Rosso* (“Red Biennium” or “Two Red Years”), Gramsci develops the question of the struggle for hegemony. On the one hand, there was the reactionary role of the hegemonic labor aristocracy in key labor struggles in the North, with the General Confederation of Labour and the role played by the Italian Socialist Party (PSI); on the other hand, with the exception of *L’Ordine Nuovo*, there was the absence of a revolutionary strategy for Italy centered on the question of building a worker-peasant bloc. Gramsci theorized proletarian hegemony within the framework of an alliance between workers—predominantly in the North—and peasants and small farmers—predominantly in the South and the Islands. In other words, Gramsci identified the principal historical contradiction of the proletarian revolution in Italy by identifying the Southern Question. While in the North the task was to disintegrate the influence of the labor aristocracy over the majority of the working class, in the South the problem was the hegemony exercised by the large feudal landowners and by a type of commercial bourgeoisie linked to real-estate speculation, which profited from this form of agrarian rent. This hegemony was exercised through liberal intellectual strata connected to the liberal professions and embedded within the administrative apparatus and local political power, who mediated the relationship between the large landowners and the peasants to the advantage of the former. The bureaucratic intellectual classes of the South found their main political and ideological



expression in liberal-reactionary Southernism of Benedetto Croce, Giustino Fortunato, etc., who, therefore, ultimately supported the domination of feudal landowners. The problem of “Unity”—that is, the bloc between the industrial proletariat of the North and the Southern peasantry—thus became the problem of disintegrating the hegemony, on the one hand, of the political and trade-union forces of the labor aristocracy and, on the other, of the reactionary bureaucratic and intellectual southern forces representing the feudal landowners and the strata that constituted an important part of the superstructure of their domination. The end of the *Biennio Rosso* marked the starting point of the fascist counter-offensive, which absorbed, incorporated, and disciplined a significant part of these forces and classes, within the framework of the corporatization and fascistization of the state and society. The hegemony exercised by these classes in the process of corporatization thus became a militarized hegemony or, in Gramsci’s words, an expression and manifestation of the “ethical state.” During the *Biennio Rosso*, just like the General Confederation of Labour and the leadership of the PSI, the Italian extreme left—represented by maximalist socialists, Bordigist–Trotskyists, and revolutionary syndicalists—proved, in full continuity with the Risorgimento left beginning with the Party of Action of Mazzini and Garibaldi, to be radically anti-peasant and therefore inevitably chauvinist and racist toward the Southern popular masses. Hence their fierce opposition to the line of the revolutionary constituent assembly of workers’ and peasants’ committees as the political perspective to be adopted in relation to the overthrow of fascism through armed struggle: first by the Bordigist majority within



the PCd'I against Gramsci's line of a revolutionary worker-peasant government, and later—after Gramsci's arrest—by the semi-Trotskyist Togliattians.

To achieve unity between workers and peasants, it was therefore necessary to combat Bordigist and maximalist opportunism as well as the reformism, corporatism, and anti-Southern chauvinism of the forces representing the labor aristocracy—an aristocracy indissolubly linked to Italian imperialism, which had taken shape, albeit marginally, at the turn of the twentieth century. At the same time, it was necessary to combat reactionary Southernism, represented not only by the darkest, most sectors of the old feudal aristocracy, but also by the much more efficient liberals and clericals within the liberal-oligarchic state and then fascism. This reactionary southernism aimed to construct a corporative unity of the “South” against the “North”⁴², founded on identity-based mythologies designed to fuse the interests and conceptions of the parasitic feudal aristocracy with those of the peasant masses through the pervasive mediation carried out by local officials and politicians, merchants and local

⁴²A corporative unity aimed at preserving, as far as possible, the existing arrangements between large industrial and financial capital in the North and feudal property in the South, Sicily, and partly and in a specific form, Sardinia. This gave rise to a reactionary form of Southernism which, behind the appearance of opposition to the imperialist North, ultimately operated in its service, with the shared interest in the subjugation of the peasant masses and in preventing any possible alliance between them and the industrial proletariat prevailing.



banks benefiting from parasitic rents, clerks and schoolteachers, accountants and lawyers.

6.9. Gramsci and the military theory of the proletariat

Gramsci made important contributions to the military theory of the proletarian revolution in Italy:

- 1) He emphasized that the particular development of the productive structure and predominantly capitalist economic relations in Italy excluded both the existence and the formation of large capitalist-industrial urban centers. This highlighted the impossibility of a situation similar to that of the October Revolution. He therefore advanced—against the dogmatic crystallizations of Bordigist–Trotskyist and falsely Marxist–Leninist theories—the theory of a ‘nationwide insurrection’, with a clear emphasis on the role of the peasant masses.
- 2) In line with his theories of passive revolution, war of position, and hegemony, he introduced the thesis that, unlike the October Revolution—where civil war followed the insurrection—in Italy civil war would have had to precede the insurrection itself.
- 3) in his notes on Machiavelli, he highlighted that a further level should be introduced between tactics and strategy, namely a level relating to operational art (in Mao, “the science of campaigns”);



4) he argued in 1924 that the war of movement—that is, armed revolution—should overthrow fascism and that, based on an assessment of spontaneity and the defensive character of the armed struggle of the *Arditi del Popolo* movement (and the armed struggle of other democratic-national movements), it was necessary to develop an “original Arditi tactic”; a thesis pointing toward an operational, rather than merely tactical, conception of the anti-fascist armed struggle (a hint of this question, albeit in a more nuanced form, can be found in the same theses of Lyon).

5) He theorized “mixed warfare” as a sort of prolonged war in which the policy of revolutionary mobilization of the masses and the disintegration of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “democratic,” “anti-fascist,” and “anti-imperialist” forces had to be combined with revolutionary war.

Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* also address numerous aspects related to specific war situations and military campaigns, as well as to strategy, tactics, and the problems of leadership and the conduct of war. These aspects testify to the great importance Gramsci attributed to the question of military theory, and they highlight a profound dialectical materialist approach, opposed on the one hand to empiricism and amateurism, and on the other to formalism and bureaucratism (for example, Trotskyist and Bordigist)⁴³.

⁴³ In certain passages, in connection with questions of military art, Gramsci highlights the irreducible opposition between democratic centralism—which strengthens and develops the relationship with the masses—and bureaucratism, which, by contrast, progressively alienates that relationship.



Overall, Gramsci's military conceptions contributed to creating the subjective conditions for the development of the great partisan war experience of the anti-fascist resistance. A war which, although lacking a truly correct strategy and political approach (there was no plan corresponding to the need for an anti-fascist people's democratic revolution on the road to socialism), was nevertheless a people's war which, in its most advanced phase, hinted at the achievement of strategic equilibrium.

6.10. Gramsci and the Southern Question

Gramsci identified the Southern Question as the main historical contradiction of the proletarian revolution in Italy. Gramsci could not rely on the theory of Maoism, yet his thought on the Southern Question contains elements which, with regard to the South and the Islands, recall the Maoist theory of bureaucrat-capitalism. Gramsci does not limit himself to highlighting how the formation of the "unitary state" in 1861 took place in collusion with parasitic feudal landowners. He also emphasizes how the so-called "liberal revolution" resulted in the colonial subjugation of the popular masses of the South and the Islands. In particular, Gramsci also clearly emphasizes, in his struggle

In these passages, a direct polemic emerges against Bordiga's theories of "organic centralism," which opposed democratic centralism in an intellectualistic form.



against Bordigism, Trotskyism, and syndicalism, how the interests of northern capital and those of southern feudal landowners moved in the direction of perpetuating the enormous backwardness of the South. Gramsci applied his theory of passive revolution to this situation, thus maintaining that feudal relations—although subject to reforms and restructuring—could not, within bourgeois rule, develop into a modern capitalist transformation. He therefore stressed how this situation in Italy tended to perpetuate the contradictions and problems of the South and the Islands rather than resolve them.⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ *“The negative element of ‘economic policing’ has so far prevailed over the positive element of the need for a new economic policy capable of renewing—by modernizing it—the socio-economic structure of the nation, even within the framework of the old industrialism. The possible legal form is one of the conditions, not the only condition and not even the most important one: it is only the most important of the immediate conditions. Americanization requires a given environment, a given social structure (or the determined will to create it), and a certain type of state... The disappearance of the semi-feudal type of rentier is, in Italy, one of the major conditions for industrial transformation (indeed, it is in large part the transformation itself), not a consequence. The economic and financial policy of the state is the instrument of this disappearance... yet it does not appear that this is, or is about to become, the direction of financial policy. On the contrary. The state creates new rentiers, that is, it promotes the old forms of parasitic accumulation of savings and tends to create closed social strata. In reality, up to now, the corporative orientation has functioned to support the precarious positions of the middle classes, not to eliminate them, and is increasingly becoming—for the interests that arise on the old basis—a machine for the preservation of the existing order as it is, rather than a driving force... The corporative orientation, born in response to such a delicate situation, whose essential equilibrium must be preserved at all costs in order to avoid an immense catastrophe, might proceed in extremely slow, almost imperceptible stages, modifying the social structure without sudden shocks: even a child, tightly swaddled, nevertheless develops and grows... In any case, the process would*



The unification of Italy in 1861 represented, from an economic and political point of view, nothing more than an incomplete liberal revolution. On the basis of large capitalist landholdings in the North (what Lenin called the Prussian path to capitalism) and a commercial-financial bourgeoisie that was often enterprising, manufacturing and subsequently large-scale industry began to develop in the North of the country. The entire country was gradually unified by the capitalist market dominated by the North and by the communication lines and infrastructure at its service. The industrial expansion of the North took place within the framework of dependence first on French financial capital and later on German capital, which directed its course by imposing a division of labor serving their own economies. This determined some fundamental characteristics of the productive structure of Italian industry that persist to this day. However, this was still a phase in which imperialism had not yet fully and organically asserted itself in France and especially in Germany, and this situation left open the narrow space through which Italian capitalism was able to advance, around the turn of the twentieth century, toward the transition to imperialism, before the completion of the division of the world among the imperialist powers closed off that possibility. Thus, although weak and marginal, Italian imperialism emerged during those years. Large monopoly

be so long and would encounter so many difficulties that, in the meantime, new interests might arise and form a new, tenacious opposition to its development, ultimately bringing it to a halt." [Gramsci, Notebook No. 22, §6]



capital continued the earlier development of capitalism centered in Northern Italy and, on this basis, imparted an imperialist character to the oppression of the South and the Islands. This general framework highlighted the continuing subjugation of the peasant masses of the South and posed as the principal problem the need for a proletarian revolution that would also involve a peasant war. The problem therefore appeared as that of a particular type of proletarian revolution—a revolution expressing the unification and mobilization of the proletarian and popular masses of the entire country. At the same time, this did not exclude the national question, which was undoubtedly present, for example, in the case of Sardinia, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. The overthrow of national oppression, together with the right to independence—particularly in relation to Sardinia, but more generally also with regard to other regional realities of the South—could only be achieved through the victory of the proletarian revolution.

6.11. Gramsci and the Theses of the Crocean–Togliattian Intellectual Bloc on the Development of Capitalism

With the rise of imperialism in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, industrial capitalism became predominant, though not completely dominant. The revolution, in the long run, had to lead to socialism, but its path, according to Gramsci, necessarily passed through the



revolutionary alliance between workers and peasants under the hegemony of the proletariat. In other words, for Gramsci the Southern and Islands Question were above all linked to a people's democratic revolution led by the proletariat, inseparably connected with the perspective of socialism. Mussolini's fascism supported the development of Italian imperialism, which fused large public and private monopolies with the state and developed, through state intervention, forms of monopoly capitalism in the countryside, often on a corporatist basis. Thus, in the South — though in a particular form, since imperialism had arisen after the creation of a national market— a kind of state-supported capitalism emerged. This capitalism operated in the service of Northern imperialism and arose from feudal landed property. On the basis of this process, feudalism itself, with regard to agrarian relations, began to transform into semi-feudalism with the growth of the agricultural proletariat. According to Gramsci, however, this process retained a feudal imprint, precisely because state capitalism in the southern countryside functioned in the service of the large industrial-financial capital of the North and therefore had no interest in promoting industrial capitalist development in the South and the Islands. This feudal survival was fully evident, according to Gramsci, in the peasant rather than proletarian mentality of the agricultural laborers, and especially in the forms of property and relations of production that subordinated the great peasant masses through servile agrarian contracts (sharecropping, emphyteusis, etc.).



After the Salerno turning point, Togliattian revisionism worked to separate the question of anti-fascist resistance from that of agrarian revolution. After the Second World War, the leadership group of the Italian Communist Party (PCI)—which had never shared Gramsci’s conception of the Southern Question or the fusion between a people’s democratic revolution led by the proletariat and the socialist revolution—advanced a political proposal aimed at restructuring semi-feudal relations through a combination of expansion of micro-property, formation of cooperatives, and the “democratic management” of consortia and associative bodies derived from fascist corporatism. This line aimed to promote more “democratic” forms of the same pseudo-agrarian reforms that the Italian state and government were beginning to design under the direct supervision of U.S. imperialism and the institutions administering the funds of the Marshall Plan. Within this framework, the PCI’s ideologues on agrarian questions (from Ruggero Grieco to Emilio Sereni) emphasized, on the one hand, many aspects concerning the oppression of the peasant masses and the role of state capitalism in the countryside, especially in the South. On the other hand, they stressed the supposed development of capitalism in the countryside, proposing a nonexistent line of demarcation between fascism—which allegedly hindered capitalism—and the advent of the “constitutional state,” which supposedly favored its development. Ultimately, even the presence and spread of state capitalism in the countryside was hailed as progressive, leading to the conclusion—also supported by the PCI—that the task was not to oppose this type of capitalism but to “democratize” it. Thus, the denunciation of state capitalism in



the countryside was not aimed at a revolutionary solution but rather at integrating the PCI into the management of that “capitalism.”

On this basis there emerged a seemingly paradoxical intellectual bloc between Crocean economists and historians and the ideologues of the PCI. Despite their differences, they converged on the thesis that Italy was moving toward alignment, in terms of its productive social structure, with the main European countries. A particular feature of the Crocean and Togliattian theses in Italy was that they represented not only an apologetic idealization of Italian imperialism, presented as the promoter of capitalist development in the South and the Islands, but also an ideological cover for the persistence and depth of semi-feudal relations in the countryside. Crocean liberal southernists (from Rosario Romeo⁴⁵ to his disciples) even went so far as to revive the old economic theories of the physiocrats of the late eighteenth century in order to argue that the land rents of parasitic southern landowners had played a progressive role in financing the development of capitalism in the North, and to proclaim that any agrarian revolution would be devastating for the country's economy.

With the formation of the New Left, including the significant presence of ideologues of workerism (*operaismo*), opposition to Gramsci's approach to the Southern Question expanded further. This gave rise to an extreme left that argued that the Southern

⁴⁵ See in particular his text “Risorgimento and Capitalism.”



Question had been overcome by the reforms of the 1950s and the so-called economic boom, and that the proper theoretical framework for analyzing the economic and social imbalances between North and South should be the critique of the “underdevelopment” of the countryside, interpreted as serving the supposed expansionary development of the capitalist system. This amounted to viewing the South as a dependent peripheral area of a modern capitalist country. The New Left in general, and workerism in particular, converged here with Trotskyism and Bordigism. It was also argued that Italy as a whole was transforming into an advanced capitalist country following the Fordist and Keynesian model of the United States. Within this framework—especially from the standpoint of workerism—a reading of Marxist economic theory was proposed in which the capitalist mode of production was seen as undergoing a continuous process of transformation and development whose main internal limit was the contradiction with the immediate economic and trade-union interests of the proletariat, which were thus regarded as the motor of the revolutionary process. Behind the form of an apparently revolutionary analysis and theory there was in reality only an economistic radicalization of liberal, revisionist, and reformist theses.

In summary, for the revival and updating of Gramsci’s approach to the Southern Question on the basis of Maoism, the ideological and political struggle against the continuators of the tradition of the Crocean–Togliattian intellectual bloc remains central and decisive. This also means opposing the opportunism of the groups descended from those hegemonic in the 1970s, and



therefore confronting today's far-left groups and small parties that periodically rediscover Trotskyist theories of dependency and underdevelopment, sometimes combined with theories of decolonization.

6.12. The "Intellectual and Moral Reform"

6.12.1. Intellectual and Moral Reform and Proletarian Ideology

For Gramsci, the question of "Intellectual and Moral Reform" is, at a general level, the question of ideology, understood as the proletarian conception of the world in relation to all aspects of reality (politics, economy, history, science, cultural and artistic life, etc.).

According to Gramsci, the bourgeoisie itself, during its phase of formation and development, also required a conception of the world corresponding to its interests. The ideology of the proletariat is a conception of the world that opposes the ideology of the bourgeoisie and, more generally, of the reactionary classes. Ideology forms the revolutionary cadres of the proletariat and raises the consciousness and revolutionary spirit of the masses.



6.12.2. The historical phase of the bourgeoisie's struggle against feudalism

Approaching the issue from a historical perspective, Gramsci points out that in Europe the bourgeoisie first had to develop a progressive worldview, embodied by the Enlightenment, which found its expression in the French Revolution and which, following the emergence of the proletariat's class struggle, created favorable conditions for the emergence and spread of socialism and utopian communism. Similarly, in Germany, the left wing of the Protestant Reformation favored the development of the peasant wars, which profoundly shook the feudal economic and political order. Together with the French Revolution, this ideological background contributed to the formation of German classical philosophy. In England, the struggle of the bourgeoisie against autocracy—represented theoretically in the field of political economy, particularly by the works of Adam Smith and David Ricardo—had also led, under the influence of the first major workers' mobilizations, to the emergence of Ricardian socialism, which provided a tendency toward a scientific theoretical basis for the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

In the main European countries, the formation of the bourgeoisie as the ruling class in the struggle against the reactionary aristocracy and its conception of the world had thus created the best ideological conditions for the transition to Marxism.

6.12.3. The role of intellectuals from the reactionary ruling classes



In that varied territorial reality which, in 1861, would emerge as the Italian Unitary State, a revolutionary bourgeoisie never fully developed. The consequence was a bourgeois revolution, which Gramsci himself defined as incomplete, linked to particularistic interests and oriented in a reactionary and corporatist sense. On the one hand, Italian intellectuals were separated from the masses, and on the other, their unification in the service of the ruling class took place either under the hegemony of the monarchical-liberal autocracy or under that of the feudal landowners and the Catholic Church. The so-called “liberal revolution” produced an Italian unity founded on bureaucratic and artificial bases, giving rise to an intellectual class characterized by aristocratic attitudes, rhetoric, paternalism, philosophical idealism, and a tendency toward passive-revolutionary conciliation of contradictions. The bourgeoisie in Italy never developed to the point of elaborating and fighting to affirm its own progressive worldview before national unification because the political and social conditions did not allow for such a development. Later, with the formation of the Italian state and especially with the transition to imperialism, the ruling reactionary classes could no longer express anything progressive without risking the strengthening of the tendency toward popular revolution. According to Gramsci, all of this was reflected in the hegemonistic and petty character of the state’s formation, which explains both the continuing absence of a genuine national literature and culture, and the establishment of a language—Italian—that remained alien to the broad popular masses. Although officially recognized, it was not socially widespread; in 1861, for example, French was still spoken at the Piedmontese



court. Italian functioned essentially as the language of the intellectual strata attached to the ruling classes, while the masses remained within the linguistic paths of their regional dialects, which might have evolved toward national linguistic unity only through a genuine bourgeois-democratic national revolution—a revolution that never occurred⁴⁶.

More generally, the bourgeoisie—represented by scattered bourgeois nuclei mainly in the Center-North—delegated the task of its unification as a class to the Savoyard bureaucratic monarchy, and thus never became the bearer of a policy aimed at diminishing the power of Catholicism.

Consequently, during the early formation of the proletariat, its most advanced sectors could not inherit or radicalize any existing progressive national worldview and instead had to confront a cultural environment that had not even passed through the phase of a Reformation of feudal ideology, remaining deeply marked by the influence of Catholicism.

⁴⁶ The Italian language was not the outcome of an evolutionary process that absorbed and superseded pre-existing diversity by incorporating its best elements; rather, it was the result of an intellectual process detached from the masses. Even today, many dialects have very little in common with standard Italian, sometimes even representing embryonic forms of distinct languages. In this regard, Sardinian may be considered, whose grammatical structure fully withstands comparison with languages such as Spanish and Portuguese and which, with a people's democratic revolution on the road to socialism, could still aspire—at least in the case of Sardinia—to develop in a popular and national direction. The introduction of Italian was an operation imposed from above, lacking real foundations in the life and concrete social practice of the broad masses of the time.



Gramsci also emphasized that the Italian Humanism and Renaissance possessed a sectarian and anti-national character: either they supported rather than overturned the Papacy and Catholicism, or they were characterized by cosmopolitanism (as in the cases of Galileo and Machiavelli), meaning they did not form part of a national renewal but instead constituted moments within the broader cultural development of major European states—from which “Italy” itself was excluded⁴⁷.

On the opposite side, however, a similar problem emerged with the formation of the first trade-union groupings and socialist political organizations. The intellectual strata promoting these potentially progressive processes were influenced by the liberal left of the *Risorgimento* (Mazzini, Garibaldi), which had always opposed the possibility of a Jacobin bourgeois revolution based on the mobilization of the broad masses. As a result, they also carried a narrow, particularistic, and intellectualistic conception of the tasks of the bourgeois revolution.

⁴⁷It is thus possible to discern how Italian intellectuals and hegemonic apparatuses (academies, schools, cultural foundations and intellectual centers, journals, etc.), in the service of the reactionary classes, have progressively contributed—on the basis of an ideological stratification spanning nearly a millennium—to the construction of a cultural “national identity” marked by literary, rhetorical, and nationalist traits, and largely fictitious. An “identity” that only Gramsci adequately exposed and critically deconstructed at its foundations.



6.12.4. Gramsci against the influence of Catholicism, reformism, and opportunism

Gramsci did not limit himself to arguing that it was necessary to separate large sections of the popular masses, represented at the time in large part by peasants, from the influence of Catholicism⁴⁸ and Croce's southern liberals. From the time of

⁴⁸ In Italy at the time of Gramsci, the significant influence that Catholicism exercised over the popular masses—particularly the peasantry—had to be taken into account. In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci systematically addresses the question of the influence of forms of political and social organization (often of a welfare, para-union, and corporative type) implemented by the Church and aimed at hegemonizing the popular masses. This represents another major issue identified by Gramsci as a specific historical node of the question of revolution in Italy—what he defines as the “Vatican Question.” Gramsci emphasizes that the influence of reactionary Catholicism, with its world center in Italy represented by the Vatican, was one of the causes of the absence of a Jacobin revolution and, more generally, of the lack of a reform such as the Protestant Reformation. The Vatican Question is itself one of the expressions—though secondary in relation to the Southern Question—of the fact that there was no real bourgeois revolution. It is therefore possible to observe the enormous distance separating Gramsci's theoretical elaboration—grounded in dialectical materialism and in the concrete analysis of the political, economic, and ideological relations prevailing in the peninsula—from the theories on the “Pontifical Republic” and on the Vatican State developed and disseminated by the CARC–nPCI in the *Programmatic Manifesto* written by Giuseppe Maj (p. 115 and following). In these theories, the connection with the structural causes of the backwardness and dualism of the Italian economy is entirely broken. For example, consider the following passage, which conceives the Church not as an expression of the persistence of semi-feudal economic relations, but as the center promoting the parasitism first of feudal landowners and later of financial capital: “The Church remained the promoting center and the main source of the parasitism of the ruling class.”



L'Ordine Nuovo onwards, Gramsci also and above all indicated that the Italian proletariat had to emancipate itself from the influence of liberal, sectarian, corporatist, economistic, and nationalist socialism, which had arisen from the decomposition of the Risorgimento left, and thus acquire a comprehensive vision of the tasks involved in conquering and leading the broad peasant masses.

On the basis of Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, and the historical experience of the ICM, Gramsci therefore affirms the need to critically rework the entire history and culture of what is now called “Italy” in order to generate a proletarian vision of the world, a guide for the formation of the intellectual subjectivity of communist cadres and militants, capable of merging with the proletariat and the popular masses. To proceed along this path, according to Gramsci, it was particularly necessary to fight resolutely against the type of subjectivity, i.e., the intellectual formation of reformist socialists, revolutionary anarchists, and liberals of the Crocean left who, albeit in different forms, converged in promoting an empiricist and pragmatist, idealist and irrationalist worldview, in stark contrast to Hegelian dialectics and historical materialism.

Even in the formation of the PCd'I, with the initial hegemony of Bordigism, this type of intellectual formation continued to arise and prevail. What was needed, therefore, was a communist party capable of embracing the universality of Marxism-Leninism and specifying it through the formation of a Bolshevized party capable of breaking with the petty and narrow corporate sectarianism of the tradition of the liberal left, reformist



socialism, and anarchism. A party, a Modern Prince⁴⁹, to represent the revolutionary interests of the proletariat and the broad popular masses of the South as the basis for an effective people's revolution directed towards socialism.

Gramsci therefore considered the question of Intellectual and Moral Reform with regard to the transformation of the intellectual formation of the cadres and militants of the old forces of the left and the revolutionary intelligentsia in the first place and, secondly, of the advanced sectors of the proletariat and the peasant masses, particularly in the South and the Islands, as an essential and decisive dimension of the proletarian revolution in Italy.

6.12.5. Note on left-wing intellectuals after the Second World War

The monarchist-fascist regime, supported by Croce's liberals and supplemented by the ultra-revisionist contributions of former socialists and "revolutionary syndicalists," continued and accentuated all the oppressive, bureaucratic-reactionary, intellectualistic, and rhetorical-nationalistic elements of the autocratic-liberal and clerical tradition. With the end of World War II, the great anti-fascist resistance came to an end and partially subsided due to the decisive role played by Togliatti's revisionists who, on a political level and in terms of class

⁴⁹The formula of the Communist Party as a modern prince is used by Gramsci in particular in Q.13 of *the Prison Notebooks* dedicated to Machiavelli and the question of the Party and the State.



relations, created the conditions for national conciliation and for the confirmation and revival of Catholicism, a semi-feudal religion. What could have been the beginning of a widespread national movement for intellectual and moral reform, capable of carrying out the tasks of reforming the Catholic religion on the model of the Protestant Reformation, but in a context characterized by the hegemony of the proletariat and historical materialism and therefore in the perspective of people's democracy and socialism, had thus come to an end. In place of this void, the hegemony of the reactionary neo-Crocian liberals, feudal Catholicism, the social democrats of the PSI, and the modern Togliatti revisionists quickly formed and rebuilt itself (PSI and PCI replenished by many ideological "ex-fascists," who began to peddle subjective idealism and irrationalism, empiricism and pragmatism of "fascist culture" and "fascist philosophy" as goods fully compatible with Marxism and Marxism-Leninism). In this context, the emergence of a literary movement such as Italian neo-realism, which could have developed as the cornerstone of a new attempt at intellectual and moral reform linked to the anti-fascist people's democratic revolution, thus folded in on itself, ending up oscillating between an apologetic-naturalistic representation of political and social contradictions and a growing nihilistic pessimism well represented by figures such as Pasolini. This retreat also led to the immediately following phase characterized by the emergence of the neo-avant-garde trend, which was only apparently more radical. In this latter trend, the struggle against bourgeois and reactionary ideology and culture essentially took the form of an intellectual and technical strategy of



deconstruction of the current forms of literature and poetry. The New Left, at least on a literary level, was born on this ideological-cultural terrain already marked by a substantial rejection of the need for effective national intellectual and moral reform. It therefore established itself as a heterogeneous force characterized by the basic idea that Italy was rapidly advancing along the path of other European countries, thus effectively achieving the Intellectual and Moral Reform whose necessity was, among other things, clearly highlighted by the Vatican Question. The New Left, led by ideologues who believed in the need to radicalize bourgeois sociology and psychoanalysis (critical Marxism, neo-Freudian left) and those of theoretical workerism (*Quaderni Rossi*), in the name of the centrality of the conflict between capital and labor, rejected and opposed Gramsci's lesson of hegemony as reformist and culturalist and with it fought the problem of an effective national, progressive, democratic, and internationalist culture, art, and literature, which can ultimately only be a product of the proletarian party moving towards revolution under the banner of the theory and ideology represented today by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and dialectical materialism.



6.13. Gramsci's critique of Freudian psychoanalysis

6.13.1. Freud between empiricism and mysticism

Gramsci criticizes Freudian psychoanalysis⁵⁰, highlighting its empirical and mystical character: Gramsci states that “[Freud] sought to create a general philosophy based on certain empirical criteria of observation.”

Marx and Engels—particularly Engels in his *Dialectics of Nature*—had already highlighted the link between empiricism and mysticism when one attempts to derive a general worldview from empirical observations. For Gramsci, therefore, the task is to strip psychoanalysis of its claim to present itself as a comprehensive worldview based on empirical data. Instead, it is necessary to proceed—also in light of the empirical results of psychoanalytic technique—by situating and critically reworking its findings within the framework of historical-dialectical materialism.

Gramsci therefore states that “*I think I can conclude at least on some points that can be considered firmly established by psychoanalytic theory, after stripping it of all its phantasmagorical and even witchcraft elements,*” he argues: “*The most important point seems to me to be this: that*

⁵⁰ *Letters from Prison*: Letter to Giulia, December 30, 1929; Letter 413, March 20, 1931; Letter 543, February 15, 1932; Letter 551, March 7, 1932. *Prison Notebooks*: Notebook I - § (33) Freud; Notebook 3 - § (3) German intellectuals; Notebook 15 - § (74) Freud and the collective man.



psychoanalytic treatment can only be beneficial for that part of society that romantic literature called ‘the humiliated and offended,’ who are much more numerous and varied than they traditionally appear. That is, those people... caught up in the harsh contrasts of modern life” [emphasis added].

6.13.2. The social strata of the ‘humiliated and offended’

With the expression “humiliated and offended,” Gramsci explicitly refers to the title of the well-known novel by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1861), using it to designate the typical figures of a wide range of exploited social strata belonging to the petty bourgeoisie, or linked to the privileged petty bourgeoisie and to the labor and service sectors aristocracy. Among these, particular importance is attributed to strata with a specific tendency toward social and political activism—especially petty intellectuals⁵¹, technicians, and skilled workers. These strata, subjected to the pressures and conflicts of capitalist society⁵² and to the commitments and necessities of class struggle⁵³, are unable to

⁵¹ In an imperialist society, the intellectual petty bourgeoisie—an intermediate and relatively privileged stratum—constitutes a particularly broad social layer, encompassing a significant, and at times even a majority, share of university students, teachers, precarious workers, workers in social welfare and healthcare services, as well as lower-level clerical employees, and so on.

⁵² For example, today this includes uncertainty about one’s future in terms of employment and economic and material conditions, repression, and so on, as well as the question of the fascistization of the state and imperialist war.

⁵³ One may consider, for example, militant commitment, the discipline required by a communist party based on democratic centralism, the harshness of the revolutionary process, and the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means for the construction of socialism.



identify fully either with the condition, interests, and historical perspective of the proletariat or, on the opposite side, with the demands, expectations, and impositions of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci therefore states with regard to peasants (whom he obviously assimilates to the proletariat in this regard): *“These situations become disastrous for very sensitive and refined temperaments, while they are necessary and indispensable for ... peasants, whose robust nerves can stretch and vibrate at a higher pitch without wearing out.”*

6.13.3. Fictitious identities

These considerations by Gramsci also apply today to petty-bourgeois intellectual strata and to those sectors of the proletariat and precarious labor that tend to identify with the conditions, customs, and lifestyle of more privileged bourgeois strata, without, however, being able to benefit from their privileges and material conditions. This gives rise to various conflicts between the expectations that emerge—reflecting a distorted self-image and a deformed understanding of one’s social condition—and the actual material reality of one’s class position, with its corresponding constraints imposed by capitalist relations and the state. The various illusory expectations of these strata—regarding the possibility of a stable and peaceful petty-bourgeois existence, the adequate realization of the self, and upward social mobility for themselves and possibly their children—thus tend to solidify into the constitutive elements of a fictitious personal and social identity. In this way, they come into contradiction with the objective limits of a situation that cannot, on average, be transcended on an individual level, but only—under entirely



different conditions—through collective organization and revolutionary militancy. In practice, this contradiction between “fictitious identity” and objective material limits at the level of individual existence is typical of petty intellectual families and their members, of secondary school and university students from popular backgrounds, of technicians, lower-level employees, and small business operators, as well as of those who—despite being wage workers—aspire to “go into business for themselves.” In the latter case, involving the creation of micro-enterprises or very small firms, it becomes particularly evident how imperialism tends to penalize and worsen their condition.

6.13.4. Implosions in the sphere of family relations and personal life and the question of ideology

The crisis of expectations and fictitious identity, as a consequence of the pressure of capitalist relations and the impositions of imperialism therefore really lead to implosions in the field of family and personal relationships, often accompanied by symptoms that appear confusingly as indicators of an underlying psychological malaise that would require specific “psychological,” “psychotherapeutic,” or even “psychiatric” treatment. However, similar processes also tend to manifest themselves on the opposite side, in the realm of militancy⁵⁴ and, even more so, during the difficulties and twists and turns of a revolutionary process.

⁵⁴ Gramsci does not in any way deny that processes of implosion of fictitious individual identities, or of interpersonal and family relationships based upon



Gramsci then points out: *“The situation becomes dramatic at certain moments in history and in certain environments, when the environment is heated to extreme tension, when gigantic collective forces are unleashed that press on individuals to the point of spasm in order to obtain the maximum yield of volitional impulse for creation.”* Gramsci does not generally take the psychoanalytic view of the need for “treatment,” but speaks of *“those people who, caught up in the fierce conflicts of modern life... are unable to come to terms with these conflicts on their own and thus overcome them by achieving a new serenity and moral tranquility.”* Gramsci therefore poses the problem not of “treatment” but, on the contrary, of ideology and political choice. The problem, which on the level of fetishistic appearance and the apparent autonomy and persistence of the symptom appears to be purely “psychological,” is traced by Gramsci back to the question of fictitious identity and therefore, in the final analysis, to the question of ideology. Fictitious identity is substantiated in the renunciation of identification with the proletariat, with the peasants and, ultimately, with political abstention in the face of the necessity for a conscious and organized choice of sides in the class struggle. Gramsci says: *“My central impression is this: that the most serious symptom of*

them, may lead to catastrophic outcomes for individuals and manifest themselves in various anti-social and self-destructive forms. This is also clearly illustrated by the trajectories followed by various militants—particularly from the second half of the 1970s onward—characterized by a shift to the opposing camp, including forms of collaboration with the authorities (“repentance”), as well as a retreat into private life, in some cases leading to deviance and forms of addiction such as heroin use.



mental imbalance... is not the very vague facts, ...which would be the reason for psychoanalytic treatment, but rather the fact... [of wanting to resort, ed.] to such treatments." Gramsci therefore argues: *"I think that... one can find serenity even in the midst of the most absurd contradictions and under the pressure of the most relentless necessity, if one manages to think 'historically' and dialectically, and to identify with intellectual sobriety one's own task or a well-defined and limited task."* Gramsci does not deny that, in a limited number of specific cases, there may indeed arise a need for psychotherapeutic or medical treatment. This applies where situations of particular weakness and dependency have been truly and tragically crushed by dominant social relations, leaving individuals with no real possibility of critically understanding their condition or practically escaping from it. In summary, Gramsci's criticism of psychoanalysis⁵⁵ is therefore consistent with the importance he attributed to ideology and the question of Intellectual and Moral Reform, to be applied first and foremost to the militants themselves.

⁵⁵ Psychoanalysis—which, not by chance, experienced a revival in Italy as a result of the crisis and dissolution of opportunist groups—became a field into which many former revolutionaries from the privileged petty bourgeoisie moved, embarking on professional careers as psychoanalysts and, more broadly, as psychotherapists.



III. IDEOLOGICAL REFERENCES: THE SPECIFICATION OF MAOISM IN IT- ALY



7. SPECIFIC THOUGHT

7.1. The revival of Gramsci on the basis of Maoism

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism must be applied to the particularities of different groups of countries (imperialist countries and oppressed bureaucrat-capitalist countries) and to the specificities of each country.

Italy belongs to the specific group of imperialist countries and, moreover, is an imperialist country with significant specificities from an economic, social, political, and cultural point of view.

Gramsci's Thought is the synthesis, up until the 1930s, of the application of Marxism-Leninism to a specific imperialist country, Italy.

Gramsci's Thought, revisited and updated on the basis of Maoism, is the Specific Thought that must be developed and affirmed for the formation of the party and for the revolution.

Today, it is necessary to work systematically and collectively, concentrating the best intellectual resources of Maoists, on the formation and development of Specific Thought in the struggle against revisionism, right-wing and "left-wing" opportunism and, through two-line struggle, between the very forces that claim to refer to Mao and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

The first phase of party building consists mainly in the formation and unification of militants on the basis of such Thought.



In the process following the formation of the party, when the question of the progressive incorporation of increasingly larger sectors of the popular masses into the party will be on the agenda, Specific Thought will in turn continue to be refined and developed in the course of actual revolutionary practice.

In this context, the party will become, to all intents and purposes, the advanced section of the masses, and its own practice will rise and spread, becoming the revolutionary practice of the masses. The Specific Thought will thus come to fully correspond to the needs of the proletarian revolution in Italy and will be able to lead it to a victorious affirmation.

7.2. Italy, a marginal and aggressive imperialism

Italy is an imperialist country that stands out from the main European countries as well as from a number of imperialist countries in Europe that are not commonly considered imperialist powers⁵⁶.

Italy is probably, together with Spain, the last European capitalist country to have entered the sphere of imperialist nations at the moment when the division of the world was completed, con-

⁵⁶ Such as Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.



demning most countries to the formation and development of bureaucrat-capitalism⁵⁷ .

Italy was formed in the mid-19th century, not so much because of a mobilization led by the bourgeoisie aimed, on the one hand, at the liberation of Lombardy and Veneto and, on the other, at the suppression of the Papal States, but rather because of France's specific interest in countering the weight and influence of the Austrian Empire.

At the time of unification, the economy of the North, after having taken on the character of a development led by large capitalist landowners⁵⁸ (well represented by the figure of Cavour himself), was under the influence of French banks. What was called the "Italian nation" was, on the whole, an economy that was deeply backward compared to that of the main European countries.

After a few years, the influence of France and its banks was replaced by that of the large German banks, which operated in close collaboration with an industry that was already highly developed in Germany. On the one hand, German banks helped to provide part of the capital necessary for the development of Ital-

⁵⁷ With the exception of the USSR and China, which, before becoming imperialist powers themselves, established socialism, and, for a certain period, other countries that achieved national liberation through progressive struggles and wars.

⁵⁸ Lenin defined this type of development as the "Prussian way" as opposed to the American way, which called for the suppression of large landholdings and the formation of extensive small-to-medium-sized peasant property.



ian industry, but on the other, they influenced its development in line with the interests of the German economy. However, this type of dependence on the German economy was not yet imperialistic and therefore did not preclude Italy from becoming an imperialistic country itself at the end of the 19th century and in the early years of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the capitalist model and industrial production structure, as well as German hegemony over the north, which now characterized Italy, were essentially defined and destined to become “historical constants.”

The rise of Mussolini’s fascism and, subsequently, with the end of World War II, the affirmation of the economic hegemony of the US, which went on to play a “supervisory” role in economic reconstruction, confirmed the Italian capitalist model as economically marginal compared to the main European countries.

Italy never overcame its status as a “shabby imperialism,” as Lenin effectively defined it, and this condition always led it not only to oppress the South and the Islands, but also to direct its expansionist aims towards North and East Africa and the Balkans. In this context, Italy has also always been characterized by a particular aggressiveness and arrogance.

Therefore, while revisionist, populist left-wing and red-brown theories that equate Italy with a colony of the US or Europe must be rejected as reactionary and nationalist, concepts such as those of Bordigism, workerism and opportunism of the “left” in general, which compare Italian imperialism to that of the main European countries, must also be combated.



In the latter case, these are positions that propose an apologetic view of the development, strength, and expansive capabilities of imperialism.

7.3. A bureaucratic and parasitic imperialism

Gramsci's thought accurately outlined the characteristics of the formation of the Italian bourgeoisie as a belated process. This process involved the integration into the bureaucratic-military structures of the Piedmontese state, not only of the various bourgeois nuclei scattered throughout the national territory, but also of all the reactionary classes existing at the time, including the feudal classes of the South and the Islands.

Gramsci points out that, while in other European countries (including most of Spain), feudalism had produced absolutism and with it the most effective framework for the formation of a national market (albeit not yet properly capitalist) and for the genesis of a sufficiently homogeneous bourgeoisie capable of presenting itself as the ruling class, none of this happened in the process of the genesis of the "Italian nation."

Hence both the historical delay of the "liberal Risorgimento revolution" and its oligarchic character, centered on the problem of the domination of the peasant masses of the South and the Islands.

By 1848, the drive for bourgeois revolution and the frontal struggle against the feudal system and its remnants had died down



throughout Europe. The bourgeoisie, already in power, compromised with the aristocracy to the point of artificially prolonging its existence and influence. This happened because the proletariat had appeared on the scene with its aspirations for a radical political and economic transformation of bourgeois society itself. Liberalism was therefore already beginning to become reactionary. A Jacobin bourgeois revolution was no longer possible in Europe because the effects and echoes of such a revolution would have fueled the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, which would have placed itself at the head of such a revolution or exploited it to develop its own initiative. Therefore, the Risorgimento could no longer be democratic-revolutionary and Jacobin due to the changed relations between the classes throughout Europe.

In addition to this, another decisive problem arose for the bourgeoisie and the feudal classes during the Risorgimento, namely that of the vast peasant masses and, especially in Sardinia, the small farmers who were the protagonists of continuous rebellions and armed revolts. Faced with this danger, and in particular with the threat of an alliance between the proletariat of the artisan and manufacturing enterprises of the North and the broad masses of the South and the Islands, the Piedmontese state presented itself as the only force capable of unifying the bourgeoisie on the one hand and defending the interests of feudal land ownership on the other.

The alliance between the monarchy, the liberal bourgeoisie, capitalist landowners, and the feudal classes took shape in the form



of the Piedmontese state's hegemony over the entire peninsula and, therefore, as a military colonial conquest of the South, the basis of the subsequent semi-colonial economic policy. The Piedmontese state thus left its bureaucratic, oligarchic, centralist, and militaristic mark on the entire country.

This state was in direct opposition to the nascent proletariat and the peasant masses. The enormous debts of the various states that made up the peninsula ended up weighing on the Piedmontese state and were thus offloaded onto the peasant masses. The super-exploitation of the proletariat and the peasant masses became the preferred system for financing, through the role of the state, the development of industrial capitalism in the north of the country. At the same time, the Piedmontese state guaranteed feudal landowners, concentrated mainly in the South and Sicily, the maintenance and safeguarding of their parasitic rents.

The state as a lever for the development of industrial capitalism in the north and as a permanent life preserver for companies and banks in crisis was in contrast to the form of state characterized by the promotion of free competition that had favored the development of industry in other European countries. Industrial capitalism in Italy, in addition to being marked by the influence and conditioning of large foreign banks, was characterized by bureaucracy, parasitism, corruption, and links to large rents, both capitalist agricultural and feudal, which in turn were increasingly intertwined with urban rents. This gave rise to a particular agrarian-industrial bloc that would lead to the genesis of a marginal and semi-dependent imperialism.



7.4. The dominant reactionary bloc

The dominant bloc, whose origins can be traced back to the unification of 1861, had undergone significant transformations with the advent of imperialism, the First World War, and fascism. Nevertheless, its fundamental characteristics continued to reproduce those of its origins.

Large industrial and financial capital, marked by a fundamental parasitism due to its intertwining with the state, with large feudal agricultural rents, and with significant sectors of international capital, had generated state monopoly capitalism. On the basis of this form of capitalism linked to imperialism and the state, with the development of banks dominated by parasitic rents and the introduction of consortia of large landowners for land reclamation and public works, semi-feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism also began to develop in the South and the Islands.

In this context, the contradiction between the backward capitalist economic and social structure and the tendency towards capitalist rationalization and modernization (Gramsci) of the productive structure marked the nature of Italian imperialism from the outset, perpetuating itself under fascism without ever reaching an effective solution.

With the end of World War II, while the Christian Democracy (DC) found itself mainly reflecting the interests of the old southern rentiers and sectors of industrial and financial capital semi-dependent on the US and Germany, part of the Italian Socialist



Party (PSI), together with Togliatti's Italian Communist Party (PCI), came to represent a social bloc made up of the labor and service-sector aristocracy and the privileged petty and middle bourgeoisie, which in turn was linked to sectors of state monopoly capital and the nascent bureaucrat-capitalism of the South and the Islands.

These were important but minority economic and social sectors of Italian imperialism, which already during fascism, particularly within the corporative system, finding expression and representation in "left-wing fascism" (Bottai, Fovel, Spirito), had sought to promote a process of so-called "capitalist modernization."

The social-democratic PSI and the revisionist PCI were in continuity with this corporative program linked to sectors of state monopoly capitalism, in an attempt to relaunch Italian capitalism, resolve the agrarian question, and create a strong imperialism independent of the US and Germany.

However, although operational, this program could not be systematically pursued by these economic and political forces, and parties such as the PSI and the PCI (like the previous "left-wing fascists") had no intention of pursuing it consistently.

In Italy, in fact, effective rationalization/modernization, with consequent alignment with the level of the major European powers, has always proved impossible, as it was necessarily linked to the drastic downsizing of the various types of parasitic rents, largely inherited from the past (from agricultural and urban rents



to those related to the bureaucratic and hegemonic apparatus of the state and generous subsidies to banks and industries). In this case, such downsizing would have had “catastrophic” political consequences for the bourgeoisie itself, with the danger of triggering a civil war.

Neither the agrarian reforms of the 1950s, which completed the transformation of feudal agrarian relations into semi-feudal ones and established the dominance of bureaucrat-capitalism in the South and the Islands, nor the so-called economic miracle gave rise to an effective rationalization and modernization of the productive structure.

In both cases, it was a passive revolution that not only failed to solve the problem but also led, over the course of the following decades, to the current structural crisis of the Italian economy and, consequently, to the worsening of the hegemonic crisis of the old parliamentary institutions.

Therefore, although the internal contradictions within the dominant bloc in Italy are perhaps more acute than in other European imperialist countries, the result of these contradictions is always their more or less forced reconciliation, which therefore never calls into question the composition of the dominant bloc. This conciliatory outcome is consistently supported by the various parties in power on the right, center, and supposed “left.”



7.5. The economic and social roots of opportunism in Italy

Since the early 1960s, with the birth of the New Left and “theoretical workerism” (initially represented by Raniero Panzieri and the *Quaderni Rossi*), with the reappearance of the old tendencies of so-called “left communism” (Trotskyism, Bordigism, council unionism) and the formation of “anti-Maoist Marxist-Leninist” groups, opportunism took hold in Italy as a varied autonomous alignment with respect to modern Togliatti revisionism.

Opportunism of the 1960s formed the basis for the formation of the hegemonic groups within the movements of the 1970s. These were groups which, taken together, gathered, organized, and mobilized hundreds of thousands of young people, workers, and members of the popular masses in the struggle, but which ultimately led everything to a failed outcome.

The main characteristic of opportunism, beyond all its variations, is that it conceives the path to a transformation of Italian society as centered on the attempt to bring about a decisive accentuation of inter-bourgeois contradictions. Two extreme poles can be distinguished within a wide range of opportunist forces. On the one hand, there are those who emphasize the role of political initiative and mobilization and, on the other, those who, on the contrary, emphasize the role of the development and radicalization of economic and social struggles.

The groups of the 1970s, which focused on the role of politics as a lever for the development of inter-bourgeois contradictions,



aimed to promote increasing pressure on the PCI to bring about, in whole or in part, a shift to the left. This type of opportunistic “strategy” was pursued both by electoral forces and by revolutionary forces linked to petty-bourgeois positions. Examples of electoral forces are those groups that were characterized by slogans such as “government of left-wing forces,” “workers’ government,” “popular front government,” and calls for the unity of all forces against coups and fascism. In the case of the revolutionaries, on the other hand, such as the Red Brigades, after the first half of the 1970s, they raised the issue, within the framework of a series of revisionist theories⁵⁹, of attacking the so-called “heart of the state,” understood as “disarticulating the dominant project of the bourgeoisie.” All this in the mid-1970s, as clearly evidenced by the killing of Moro, conceived by the Red Brigades themselves as a key figure in the realization of the historic compromise, took place with the aim of “pushing to the left” certain components of the PCI and trade unions (first and foremost the “trade union left” well represented in the factory councils of the time). These were forces that opposed the formation of the DC-PCI national unity government and the introduction of what some trends in bourgeois sociology of those years defined as “neo-corporatism” (to indicate the formation of consultative bodies between institutions, employers’ organizations, and trade union confederations).

Organized groups and movements essentially linked to trade unionism and workerism (operaismo), which, unlike the positions

⁵⁹ See previous notes 26 and 37.



of the previous camp, focused directly on promoting and radicalizing economic and social demands, aimed instead to bring about economic change through their practices in order to achieve the maximum level of “capital development.” This was with the aim of fully realizing what they called the “Plan of Capital.” All this was supposed to lead to pure and direct opposition between wage labor and the ruling class, thus confirming the antagonistic and revolutionary nature of the economic-trade union struggle. These trade unionist, movementist, and economic forces also leveraged the tendencies and contradictions inherent in Italian capitalism and therefore in the ruling bloc itself, transfiguring, idealizing, and absolutizing them.

To summarize the question of the roots of opportunism, it can therefore be argued that they derived (and still derive) from the idea that Italian capitalist development, the dominant bourgeois bloc and the political forces that reflect its various internal components contain within themselves useful and progressive underlying tendencies and contradictions that can be leveraged, with the aim of accentuating and strengthening them through mobilization and struggle. These are tendencies and contradictions on which, therefore, it is believed possible to base a strategy aimed at “modifying the balance of power” (or “accumulating forces”), which is assumed to be necessary in order to achieve more radical and revolutionary changes⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Regarding the revisionist forces that today claim to refer to “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” it is necessary to critically evaluate, in this regard, the so-called “people’s war strategy” of the CARC-nPCI, which aims, by



In summary, it is the theory of necessity, as the presumed path to civil war and proletarian revolution, of forcing the development of Italian capitalism towards modernization against the interests of significant sections of the bourgeoisie itself. This theory therefore denies the organically backward, marginal, and semi-dependent character of Italian imperialism, which can only “develop” over time through passive revolutions that, while partially modifying its social and class forms and composition, can never change its fundamental nature. A nature that is ultimately expressed in the perennial dynamic between the emergence of inter-bourgeois contradictions and the related outcomes of either their rapid reconciliation or, in the most critical cases, their disciplining through state intervention.

What matters, therefore, is the fact that in Italy the prevailing aspect is that of collusion between bourgeois factions and par-

working on inter-bourgeois contradictions, to promote a “people’s bloc government.” The essence of this strategy consists in the assumption that the contradictions of the ruling bloc can be exacerbated to the point of catastrophic outcomes. This theory, while differing in some decisive aspects, is similar to the line of “armed Menshevism” that guided the Red Brigades in the second half of the 1970s. Similarly, the revisionist conception of the state of Althusserian origin that underlies this theory is also similar, according to which the state is an unstable system of equilibrium between mutually competing groups of the ruling class. Gramsci’s theory of the Southern and Islands Question, reflecting the specific nature of Italian capitalism and imperialism, necessarily translates into the basic assumption that the dominant bloc will always present itself as united against the proletariat and the popular masses. Contrary to what CARC-nPCI claims, there can therefore be no catastrophizing of this bloc through pressure on opportunist forces that may be present in bourgeois parliamentary institutions, and therefore not even through a supposed counter-government of national liberation, national salvation, or indeed a people’s bloc.



ties, and that this reflects the underlying fact that the tendency towards rationalization/modernization, while it may seem to gain momentum at certain stages, always ends up being aborted, thus confirming that Italy, due to its economic backwardness, is the soft underbelly of the imperialist chain. This is therefore a 'passive-revolutionary' dynamic, typical of Italian capitalism, which consequently imposes on the proletariat a strategy independent of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces, based on the need to form a proletarian hegemonic bloc comprising all the potentially revolutionary sectors of the popular masses.

7.6. The Social Question

The economic situation of the working class and the masses is not simply determined by the capitalist exploitation typical of an imperialist country but is aggravated by the particular backwardness of Italian capitalist development and its marginal character. The situation of the working class in Italy is not comparable to that of many other European countries in virtually all respects: average wage levels, working hours, intensity of work, taxation, harmful working conditions, labor law protections, trade union rights, pensions, and the incidence of costs related to health care, education, and transportation. This situation is even worse than that of another marginal imperialist country such as Spain, where the cost of living and the quality of services more than compensate for the difference, which is in any case very small, between the average wage levels of the two countries. The working class in Italy has always been subject to surplus exploitation due to the characteristics of Italian capitalism, which is charac-



terized by a low average level of technological development and therefore also of its productive structure, with a high presence of small businesses and consequent backwardness and a large presence of mature and obsolete production. However, the bargaining system to which the working class and therefore all related institutions are subject is also the benchmark for the wage and regulatory levels of a wide range of social strata characterized by dependent work, which is subject to exploitation in terms of the production of services that do not generate surplus value. This means that a very significant part of society is characterized by working conditions and, therefore, economic and living conditions that fluctuate around those of the industrial proletariat. This situation becomes particularly burdensome in the case of the agricultural proletariat where, partly due to the significant presence of immigrant workers subject to oppressive and discriminatory regulations, the result is servile and therefore semi-feudal working conditions. Alongside this situation relating to dependent employment, there is also widespread individually managed micro-entrepreneurship and an even more widespread small business sector, mainly family-run (farmers, small livestock breeders, small businesses and restaurants, small tourism businesses, workshops, etc.). These are millions of workers who, particularly in the South and the Islands, also represent, together with a very high real rate of precariousness and unemployment, the legacy of failed agrarian reform and the persistence and accentuation of the Southern Question. These workers are specifically exploited by the industrial, financial, and commercial monopolies of the Center-North which, in alliance with large agri-



cultural landowners, take advantage of their services and often the value they produce in the form of self-exploitation. This general situation, which directly affects young people from the popular masses and sometimes even young people from the privileged petty bourgeoisie, has significantly worsened their condition in terms of unemployment and job insecurity, as well as the economic resources available to them, compared to that of their peers in past decades. Overall, the situation of the popular masses, particularly in Italy, is aggravated by privatization, the increasingly advanced dismantling of services, additional costs for healthcare, transport, and education, the level of taxation (burdened by major public works and enormous military spending), continuous increases in the prices of consumer goods, and the cost of rent.

The social question in Italy cannot be solved by reformism, even in the best sense of the term. However necessary the struggle to defend and assert the economic interests of the working class and the masses may be, the social question cannot be resolved in any way without going through a People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism. This is therefore the main point to be affirmed at the theoretical, political, and practical-organizational levels in the struggle against opportunist groups and against the positions and political approach of the various grassroots and alternative trade unions.

7.7. The Southern Question

The economic and social transformations of the 1950s and 1960s did not lead to a true capitalist modernization of Italy and there-



fore did not even resolve the problems relating to the Southern and Islands Question.

The unification of Italy in 1861 had brought about a bureaucratic unification from above, based on collusion between the various bourgeoisie groups, mainly agrarian (capitalist landowners, commercial and financial), scattered throughout the territory, and the feudal rentier class with its specific parasitic bourgeoisie. The North, already predominantly capitalist, with the full support of the feudal landowners of the South itself, treated the peasant population of the South and the Islands as a colonial power. Areas of feudalism were present in Central Italy and the North-East, but the bulk of feudal rent was located in the South and the Islands, albeit with a partial specificity in the case of Sardinia. On this basis, with the creation in 1861 of a single state entity, characterized by the weight and influence of the Piedmontese state bureaucracy, an internal market based on subordination to northern capitalism also developed. The establishment of the dominant bloc, based on the axis between capitalism in the North and feudal property in the South, raised from the outset the question of the proletarian revolution in Italy as linked to the formation of the revolutionary workers' and peasants' bloc and thus ruled out the possibility that the emerging Southern and Insular question would adopt as its central and decisive aspect that of the National Question, i.e., the bourgeois-democratic revolution for the national independence of the South and the Islands from the North. The resulting structure of the Italian economy, as Gramsci pointed out, was predominantly defined by capitalism. It is a dualistic structure that is still a specific characteristic



of Italy, and therefore not present in any other European country. When, about forty years after the end of the Risorgimento, Italy entered the imperialist phase, the agricultural structure of the South was still fundamentally feudal. Italian imperialism therefore colluded with the feudalism of the South, with the result that the large peasant masses and small farmers of the South and the Islands were exploited not only by feudal rent and the parasitic bourgeoisie, but also by the imperialism of the North. After World War I, and especially during fascism, state monopoly capitalism (public and private) developed, and feudalism began to transform into semi-feudalism. The economy of the South and the Islands took on pre-capitalist characteristics without, however, leading to the liquidation of large parasitic landholdings. It did not, therefore, create a large peasantry and did not develop small accumulating farms capable of evolving and building the widespread economic fabric necessary for the development of industry.

Towards the end of World War II, the PCI, characterized by the predominance of Togliatti's revisionism, broke the revolutionary bloc of workers and peasants and separated the question of anti-fascist resistance from that of the development of the peasant war in the South, thus laying the conditions for "national unity" and for the "constitutional parliamentary state" that would be established in the following years.

Semi-feudalism in the 1950s underwent a period of profound restructuring with the so-called "agrarian reforms" supervised by US imperialism and managed by reform bodies directed by the public sector of state monopoly capitalism. These agencies, par-



ticularly active in the South and the Islands, led to the establishment of a particular form of bureaucrat-capitalism in the South and the Islands. Since then, the process, combined from the outset with the establishment and role of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Fund for the South)⁶¹, has developed in various ways without ever managing to eliminate parasitic land ownership which, on the contrary, largely thanks to the role of bureaucrat-capitalism, has become intertwined with speculative income linked to public works and urban land management. This has led to a situation of decomposition of agricultural relations in the South and the Islands, with a consequent enormous migratory flow. This situation has produced a widespread marginal urban petty bourgeoisie engaged in typical backward tertiary sector activities and the transformation of millions of peasants into small landowners with poorly productive micro-farms. Hence the endemic precariousness and unemployment that persists in the South and the Islands. With regard to the specific issue of agricultural relations, small farms continue to prevail in agriculture and livestock farming over semi-servile wage labor. It is also a picture characterized by small, unproductive farms and properties, often forced to operate in the form of cooperatives and con-

⁶¹ Established in 1950 and operating in the South and the Islands in the construction of the road, rail, and port network, mostly at the service of the imperialist capitalism of the North, in land reclamation in close connection with agricultural rent, and in the formation of industrial centers, known as the “cathedrals in the desert.” In 1984, a transition phase began towards the liquidation of this entity, and the crisis of this form of bureaucrat-capitalism, which still persists today, emerged in full.



sortia and linked to a type of production imposed and regimented by Italian and European imperialism. The main signs of all this are the specific conditions of poverty, oppression, and exploitation of the masses in the South and the Islands, the backwardness of capitalist development of agricultural relations in the South, and the relative persistence of the absence of an effective capitalist-industrial structure.

The Southern and Island Question is therefore first and foremost a question of backward pre-capitalist production relations which, through the economic, administrative, and political structures of large state monopoly capital, are geared towards the interests of Italian and European imperialism. This is an insurmountable question without the destruction of the dominant bloc of Northern imperialism and parasitic property and the specific form of bureaucrat-capitalism in the South and the Islands. These economic relations are the foundation of the economic and social oppression of the popular masses of the South and the Islands.

The superstructure corresponding to these relations has always been the negation of the liberal-democratic order. In particular, since World War II, the South has been characterized by a specific form of militarism and fascism linked not only to the oppressive actions of the Italian state, but also to the role of the mafia and the camorra and the spread of military servitude. The elements related to the national oppression of the islands and the south by the Italian state are one aspect of this political superstructure and can only be resolved on the basis of the destruction



of the structure of economic, social, and class relations that form its foundation.

7.8. The Sardinian Question

Within the framework of Northern Italy's subordination to imperialism, Sardinia is dominated by a bureaucratic form of capitalism intertwined with a backward economy. This economy is mainly concentrated in livestock farming, agriculture, tourism, marginal services, construction, and industrial and mining production, which is largely marginal and obsolete, marked by the profound structural crisis of bureaucrat-capitalism. This economy is largely characterized by pre-capitalist features and related semi-feudal production relations, represented in particular by the system of cooperatives and consortia of small livestock breeders and farmers, which operates in the service of northern imperialism and precludes the vast majority of member companies from the possibility of effective capitalist accumulation. In this context, the green economy imposed by Italian imperialism and other imperialist countries (including China) translates into very limited increases in the employment of local labor, accompanied by further levels of exploitation, impoverishment, and plundering of economic and natural resources. The absence and impossibility of a widespread intermediate industrial sector and a modern capitalist structure of agricultural relations is therefore evident, as is the dominance of state monopoly capitalism, financial capital, and large rents linked to tourism and large-scale distribution.



The Sardinian Question is the question of the oppression of the Sardinian people. It is primarily structural, i.e., economic and social, and in this respect, it differs from other oppressed realities in the South and Sicily only in the forms deriving from a previous feudal phase, which was characterized by greater fragmentation of agricultural land. The solution to the Sardinian Question requires, first of all, as far as the economic and social structure is concerned, an alliance between the Sardinian people and the masses of the peninsula, within the framework of the formation of a revolutionary bloc with proletarian hegemony for an Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism, directed, in particular with regard to Sardinia, against the imperialism of the North, bureaucrat-capitalism, and the reactionary Sardinian bourgeois classes.

The political superstructure corresponding to this type of economic and class relations is that imposed by the state and by Italian military and NATO-related servitudes, which operate in Sardinia with the support of a large parasitic bourgeoisie. This superstructure highlights the collusion and collaboration of all those bourgeois and opportunistic forces that set out to “engage in politics” and “express the interests of the Sardinian people” within the “representative institutions” of the Italian state. The oppression of the Sardinian people, as far as politics is concerned, is related to the superstructure. Firstly, it relates to the oppression exercised by the state on the Sardinian masses. In this context, the state acts as an expression and synthesis of economic and structural relations. On this level too, the Sardinian Question is an integral part of the Southern Question, and this



dimension of political oppression can only be resolved through an Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism.

The Sardinian Question also contains, as far as the superstructural level is concerned, some aspects relating to a National Question.

These aspects consist in the crystallization, first sanctioned by the so-called “perfect fusion” of 1847 and then by the formation of the “unitary state” of 1861, of the line of significant bureaucratic-administrative continuity between Spanish feudalism and the Piedmontese state relating to colonial-type oppression. This “crystallization” has continued to persist to this day, albeit through various developments and modifications, ending up representing, at least in part, the specific form in which the bourgeois state exercised its domination over the Sardinian masses.

The history of oppression in Sardinia, as far as aspects related to the National Question are concerned, goes back a long way, starting with the defeat of the most progressive line of Sardinian feudalism, famously represented by the Giudicato d'Arborea (1350-1400) and the related Carta de Logu. This line could have paved the way for the formation of a commercial and banking bourgeoisie capable of leading the Sardinian people towards the organic formation of their own national entity. With the Aragonese gaining the upper hand, Sardinia declined and the bourgeoisie that formed took on a parasitic character, dependent on Spanish feudalism. The “principals” emerged as the representatives of this “bourgeois-feudal” class and thus as the true social and political support of feudalism, first Spanish-Catalan and then Sa-



voyard. In the early 18th century, Sardinia became a bargaining chip between the major powers of the time. For a few years, it also became a fiefdom of Austria. Subsequently, in 1720, it was ceded by Austria to the Savoy monarchy. In 1847-1848, the so-called “perfect fusion” was achieved under the rule of the Piedmontese state.

In general terms, Sardinia is part of the Southern Question in economic and political terms, but it also has specific characteristics that transcend this. These revolve largely around the existence of aspects relating to the National Question that are more pronounced than in the rest of the southern regions.

These aspects of the National Question, as particular elements of a more general economic and political oppression, can only be resolved through an Anti-fascist People’s Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism. Only the victory of the people’s revolution based on the hegemony of the proletariat can in fact create the conditions for the Sardinian people to freely exercise their right to self-determination and, therefore, to evaluate whether to choose, on democratic and internationalist grounds, the path of independence.

The proletariat, led by an effective Maoist party, must therefore enshrine in the general program of the Anti-fascist People’s Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism the self-determination of the Sardinian people, who will then have to assess whether it is convenient to choose the path of an internationalist and anti-imperialist federation of independent states of people’s



democracy, or decide to become part, possibly on a federal basis, of an “Italy” on the path to socialism.

The history of the Sardinian people is a history of classes, in which the red thread of struggle shines through, first against the Roman and Aragonese invasions, then against baronial feudalism, the Church, and the Piedmontese state, and then against fascism, the Italian bourgeois state, northern imperialism, and military servitudes.

These struggles gradually developed into genuine class struggles, starting with the Jacobin sectors of the bourgeoisie, promoters of the epic Sardinian revolutionary uprisings characterized by the armed organization of the pastoral and peasant masses, and culminating in the persistent and endemic struggles of shepherds, oppressed intellectuals and, in particular in the last century, the quantitatively limited proletarian and working-class sectors. This red thread has always been reflected in various aspects of customs, art, and popular traditions, poetry, and literary works, as well as in a linguistic articulation that has often presented the phenomenon of a distinction between the “high language” of the exploitative and parasitic classes and the “low language” of a people of shepherds and peasants. All this testifies to the profound validity of the teachings of Gramsci, Lenin, and Mao, according to whom internationalism necessarily also involves the defense and enhancement of everything that, in various countries and territories, the red line of class struggle and the social practice of human development have produced in the cultural, artistic, literary, and linguistic spheres.



The class struggle in Sardinia has gone through phases of greater intensity and radicalism, such as those represented by the Sardinian revolution, the struggles against the closure (*chiudende*) of collective lands, the opposition to the monarchical-liberal and autocratic-bureaucratic state of Piedmont first and then Italy, and finally the struggle against fascism and the great popular, workers' and students' struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the history of class struggle in Sardinia, two phases are of particular importance. The first is that of the Sardinian revolutionary uprisings. The most advanced part of Sardinia at the end of the 18th century had attempted the path of Jacobin bourgeois-democratic revolution, a unique attempt compared to those regional and territorial realities that, in 1861, would go on to form the "Italian nation." In Sardinia, the most advanced bourgeois circles laced themselves at the head of the masses of shepherds, peasants, small artisans, and anti-feudal intellectuals, and promoted the establishment of an embryonic people's army, putting the destruction of feudalism and the construction of a bourgeois democratic republic on the agenda. The Sardinian revolution, which lasted from 1794 to 1812, taking as its date the martyrdom of the last Jacobins (martyrs of the anti-monarchical revolt of Palabanda), however heroic and worthy of celebration by the Sardinian people, did not win and perhaps could not even win. The reactionary strata linked to feudalism and those of the moderate bourgeoisie had joined forces with the Piedmontese state and the papacy in the counter-revolution.

The second phase concerns the radicalism and extent of the popular, workers' and student movements in Sardinia in the 1960s



and 1970s. This phase developed in substantial continuity and correspondence with the development and intensification of the class struggle on the Italian peninsula.

Consideration of these two different historical phases leads us to highlight two issues on the political level linked to current events.

The first is that the failure of the Sardinian bourgeois-democratic revolution highlighted that the Sardinian revolution needed to build a sufficiently broad social and political alliance in order to establish an independent state on democratic and progressive foundations and thus defeat both the reactionary Sardinian classes and the reactionary feudal Piedmontese bureaucracy. In the situation at the time, the only foundation for such an alliance could have been a Jacobin party operating on the peninsula, which would have set itself the task of mobilizing and uniting the broad peasant masses in a revolutionary war capable of striking at the foundations of Piedmontese autocracy and the papacy. As is well known, however, such a party did not really exist.

Applied to the present situation, this historical experience shows that, both with regard to the resolution of structural issues and those relating to the domination of the bourgeoisie, and those pertaining to the resolution of the national aspects of the Sardinian Question, it is necessary for the Sardinian people to form a revolutionary political alliance with the proletariat and the popular masses of the peninsula, thus becoming an active and leading part of a people's bloc capable of asserting itself over the imperialism of the North, thereby also breaking military servi-



tude such as that represented by NATO, within the framework of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism.

The second consideration is that the 1960s and 1970s showed that the dynamics of the class struggle, while taking specific forms in Sardinia compared to the peninsula, follow the same rhythm of development, and therefore the rise of the revolutionary movement in Sardinia corresponds to a similar rise in the peninsula and vice versa. There is therefore not only a need for the Sardinian people to contribute to the construction of a revolutionary people's bloc that also includes the proletariat and the popular masses of the peninsula, but there is also an objective dynamic that works precisely in this direction.

In the 1970s, it was only when, for various reasons, the potentially revolutionary situation receded on a general level that direct demands for independence emerged in Sardinia. These demands were the product of a fundamental skepticism about the real possibility of development of the class struggle on the peninsula, which could also guarantee self-determination for the Sardinian people in the future. There was a lack of understanding that the causes of the general decline were to be found in the ideological and class limitations of the organized political experiences of that phase and in the related absence of a party capable of effectively adopting the centrality of the Southern Question and the Sardinian Question and thus organizing and launching a protracted Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution. From the late 1970s to the present day, this situation has recurred several times in Sardinia and has marked and characterized various



attempts by left-wing independence forces. Today, a significant part of the Sardinian population aspires to greater autonomy from the decisions and impositions of the Italian state, and various Sardinian anti-imperialist opposition forces support the option of independence.

Only the unity between the proletariat and the popular masses of the North, South, and Islands can guarantee the victory of the People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism and, with it, the full solution of the various dimensions of the Sardinian Question. In the 1960s and 1970s, the banners of anti-imperialism and internationalism guided the revolutionary struggle on an international scale, with the contents and guidelines of the Maoist Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution playing an essential role. There can be no democratic and internationalist solution to the Sardinian Question without the revival of these banners. It is necessary for a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organization to develop in Sardinia that will become the protagonist of this journey and thus an integral part of the reconstruction of Antonio Gramsci's Communist Party on the basis of Maoism as the guide of the People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism.

7.9. The People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism

In order to be addressed and resolved, the Southern and Island Question today requires the unity of the proletariat of the Center-North and the most exploited petty-bourgeois strata with the



popular masses who constitute the vast majority of the population of the South and the Islands.

The intrinsically dualistic structure of the Italian economy determines the specific character of the proletarian revolution in Italy. Such a revolution can only be characterized by an uninterrupted revolutionary process. A revolution that is proletarian from the outset, in that it is based on the hegemony of the proletariat and linked to the prospect of socialism, but in its initial phase also of a people's democratic type, as the expression of a system of class alliances comprising vast intermediate petty-bourgeois strata, especially in relation to the South and the Islands.

If we start from the simple assumption of Italy's imperialist character and the undoubted preponderance of capitalism linked to industrial production, and if at the same time we abstract from the question, albeit decisive in itself, of the advance of the fascistization of the state, we should conclude that the proletarian revolution in Italy must be directly socialist. A revolution that should therefore aim to channel and concentrate the country's resources in favor of the industries of the North and Center-North in order to quickly determine the conditions for the socialization, on a general scale, of the means of production. On this basis, it should be assumed that the industrial proletariat of the North and Center-North, advancing in the course of the revolution, will be able to push forward, by its example, the petty bourgeoisie of the South and the Islands, leading them to side with the socialist revolution and accept a sudden renunciation of private ownership of the means of production.



Understood in these terms, as is commonly understood, the strategy of directly socialist revolution⁶² is theoretically and politically incompatible with the effective assumption of the Southern and Islands Question⁶³.

Only the strategy of the People's Democratic Revolution starts from the assumption that the Southern and Islands Question is the central theoretical and political question for determining the form and content of the proletarian revolution. Only this strategy affirms the need for a first phase of people's democracy based

⁶² This strategy was supported in the 1970s by all the opportunist forces of – “Marxist-Leninist” orientation (from the remnants of the PCdI (Nuova Unità) to the PC(M-L)I, formerly also known as *Servire il Popolo* and then *La Voce Operaia*), Trotskyist, Bordigist, and by militant forces such as the Red Brigades and their various splinter groups and, of course, linked to the theory of the relevance of communism, by the more strictly workerist forces such as *Potere Operaio* and *Autonomia Operaia*. This strategy contributed in no small way to the defeat of the potentially revolutionary mass movement of those years. Today, this strategy is supported by all the forces that refer, in opposition to Maoism, to Marxism-Leninism (FGC, FC, *Piattaforma Comunista*, etc.), to Mao's Thought (PMLI), to Bordigism (SI Cobas, TIR, etc.), Trotskyism (PCL, PCR) and, in some ways, even workerism (among the forces that combine references to Marxism-Leninism and workerism, the *Rete dei Comunisti* should also be considered). Even the two main Italian groups that claim to refer to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (CARC-nPCI and *Proletari Comunisti-PCm*) reject the strategy of People's Democratic Revolution and instead support the strategy of directly socialist proletarian revolution.

⁶³ Consequently, supporters of this strategy also deny the possibility, or acknowledge it only in a purely formal way, that with the victory of the People's Democratic Revolution, the Sardinian people could freely decide on the possible establishment of their own independent state.



on the hegemony of the proletariat, within the framework of a system of alliances between the proletariat, the lower and middle strata of the petty bourgeoisie, and the popular masses of the South and the Islands.

This strategy presupposes that the proletariat, once the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution has been won and the bulk of industry in the North and Center-North has been socialized, cannot immediately raise the issue of socializing the means of production to the vast popular masses of the South and the Islands. This is because it is first necessary to bring the South up to the level of the North, thus supporting small-scale production and small businesses in the South and the Islands as a basis for the creation of a widespread industrial fabric linked to the resources and needs of the various regional and local realities. We must therefore also work to unify small-scale production into larger economic associations that can act as transitional links towards socialism. This is also in order to highlight the economic advantages of supporting large and medium-sized socialized industry. With the People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism, the popular masses of the South and the Sardinian and Sicilian people can experience firsthand that the New State, in addition to guaranteeing self-determination and the possibility of independence, is nevertheless different and the opposite of the State dominated by the imperialism of Northern Italy and that, consequently, the path to independence may not be indispensable.

If we consider these two different strategic hypotheses related to the proletarian revolution, we must conclude that pursuing the



strategy of directly socialist revolution tends to lead, in general terms, to the isolation of the proletariat from broad sections of the petty-bourgeois masses and, in particular, to a split and opposition between the proletariat of the North and the bloc of the popular masses of the South and the Islands.

The centrality of the Southern and Insular Question for the definition of the strategy of revolution in Italy is therefore not at all compatible with the simple affirmation of the necessity of socialist revolution. Indeed, the call for socialist revolution in Italy is even inconsistent or fundamentally erroneous if the character of the proletarian revolution that needs to be affirmed is not precisely determined.

In addition to these two different visions of the strategy of proletarian revolution, there is a further vision that focuses on the question of national oppression as regards the approach to the Southern and Islands Question. In this context, the struggle for the direct achievement of independence is proposed as a condition for the possibility of emancipation of the popular masses and, eventually, for socialism. This vision is therefore opposed to the problem of building a revolutionary bloc with the popular masses of other areas of the peninsula for a common proletarian revolution.

This point of view is present today not only in Sardinia, but also in Sicily and other regions of southern Italy. In general, as well as being a consequence of the perception of oppression related to the domination of the Italian state, it is also a reflection of the hegemonic crisis of the state itself, and the forces connected to



it. From the point of view of the proletariat and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, it should be noted that the ideological limitation of such an approach lies in its tendency towards an idealistic view on a philosophical level and therefore an intellectualist view on a political level (see, for example, today's influence of post-modern theories of decolonization), which does not adequately consider the structural aspects of the Southern and Islands Question and therefore the actual configuration of existing class relations. Today, this point of view represents an expression of the level of consciousness and aspirations of the oppressed intermediate strata of the southern and insular petty bourgeoisie.

Gramsci had already clearly pointed out that the Southern and Islands Question, while it did contain relevant aspects related to the national question, was primarily a structural and therefore class issue, hence the centrality of the proposed alliance between the proletariat and the peasants and therefore between the predominantly proletarian masses of the North and the oppressed and exploited masses of the South and the Islands, who were predominantly petty bourgeois (peasants, farmers, small traders, etc.).

In this context, from the point of view of the proletariat and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, it is necessary to fight to build the bloc for the proletarian revolution by realizing the alliance between the popular masses of the North and those of the South and the Islands.

However, it is not possible to build this revolutionary mass bloc without fighting against the nationalistic and racist chauvinism



of the labor and service-sector aristocracy of the North and the political bloc organically linked to the public and private sectors of state monopoly capitalism and to various strata of the media and the privileged petty bourgeoisie. The question also concerns the need to fight against the reactionary parties of the center-left and the collaborationist trade unions (CGIL-CISL-UIL) which, in the name of national interests and policies, foment division between the North and the South. It also concerns the need for ideological and political demarcation from the formations of the extreme left which deny the relevance and constant accentuation of the Southern Question⁶⁴.

On an apparently opposite side, we must also fight against the southernist and/or independence forces which, in the name of a supposed unified culture, history, and identity of the South and the Islands, rehabilitate the feudal system, obscure the role of large incomes and their links with the mafia and fascism, promote interclassism and corporatism, and fight historical materialism, class struggle, and proletarian revolution. Some of these forces in Sardinia are red-brown in character, proclaiming independence and promoting reactionary positions such as those that emerged a few years ago, aiming to link Sardinia to the project

⁶⁴ In essence, in addition to opposing the classic tendencies of Trotskyism, Bordigism, and councilism, it is also necessary to fight against red-brown nationalist positions (such as Prospettiva Unitaria), left-wing populist positions (Rete dei Comunisti, PAP, Rifondazione Comunista, PCI), and false Marxist-Leninist positions (primarily represented by the Fronte della Gioventù Comunista and the FC).



of a confederation of small independent states in the Mediterranean revolving around an “independent Catalonia.”

7.10. The Democratic Question: for a New Resistance

The strategy of the Uninterrupted People’s Democratic Revolution finds its necessity in the whole set of Italian economic and political relations that are reflected not only in the Southern and Islands Question, but also in the bureaucratic-reactionary structure of a state that has never gone through a true demo-liberal phase.

From this point of view, the twenty years of fascism continued the policy of Piedmontese monarchical-liberal autocracy that founded the centralist Unitary State. Similarly, after World War II, the Anti-Fascist Resistance, essentially due to modern Togliatti revisionism, resulted in a passive revolution which, as is well known, saw the perpetuation of much of the bureaucracy of the fascist political-military corporate system in different forms and, this time, within the framework of the hegemony and supervision of US imperialism.

The glorious season of anti-fascist resistance was thus followed by the establishment of a liberal-reactionary state that did not mark a real break with fascism and the monarchy and immediately began persecuting partisan fighters, avant-garde workers, and peasants fighting for land.



Italy has lacked true bourgeois democracy, and what has happened since the end of World War II has only reinforced this fact, which has been accompanied for decades by a growing fascistization of the state, culminating, among other things, in the current far-right government.

The anti-fascist resistance had already highlighted that the path to proletarian revolution in Italy could only be that of anti-fascist people's war and uninterrupted revolution as a form of transition to the establishment of socialism. Gramsci therefore rightly opposed, in the early 1930s, the Trotskyist, Bordigist, and, at that time, Togliattian strategy of directly socialist revolution, reaffirming the need, under the hegemony of the proletariat, for an alliance between the working class and the peasants for the establishment of a revolutionary anti-fascist people's government.

The nature of Italian capitalist development and the marginal character of imperialism resulting from this development, the Southern and Islands Question, and the bureaucratic-reactionary form of the state, which was never able to become truly liberal in the sense of the main European states of the nineteenth century, are inextricably linked and insurmountable without the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution.

The democratic question, which since the unification of Italy has weighed in various forms not only on the proletariat and the popular masses, but often also on situations related to the condition and aspirations of the intermediate strata of the petty bourgeoisie, particularly in the South and the Islands, can only be addressed and resolved by a proletariat that acts as the guide of a



revolutionary popular front, all the more so given the irreversibility of the fascistization currently underway, which in any case requires a New Resistance. Therefore, this issue can only have a revolutionary people's democratic solution today and cannot, in any minimally relevant aspect, find a solution within the bourgeois sphere.

7.11. The struggles of the 1960s and 1970s and those of today

Italian society has specific contradictions that have been going on for at least centuries, generally getting worse and becoming more acute in phases like the current one. The change in forms over the various historical phases has not resolved or mitigated the potentially disruptive nature that today defines Italy as a weak link in the imperialist chain. The social question, the democratic question, the Southern and Islands Question, together with the unresolved aspects of the agrarian question and the permanent aspects of the problem of intellectual and moral reform, constitute the specific historical nodes of the problem of the proletarian revolution. It is not simply a question of the general problem of capitalism, imperialism, and the necessity of socialism. but rather of issues that characterize Italy in a specific way and which, although they can be resolved in abstract terms within a capitalist and even imperialist context, cannot be resolved in the specific context of the Italian situation without the proletariat, through its party, organically translating them into a



revolutionary, democratic, popular, and anti-fascist process on the path to socialism.

These historical nodes are objective, meaning that they operate even outside the consciousness and will of communist and revolutionary political forces and the level of organization, consciousness, and class initiative of the proletariat, youth, and popular masses. The fundamental issues of the revolution in Italy must be understood, studied, and adequately translated into theory and then into a program, strategy, and line, into the content and form of the proletarian revolution, so that the latter can actually be successfully realized. The question of developing the revolutionary theory that will guide the proletarian revolution essentially consists of this task. The political-practical counterpart of this task is the transformation of the “spontaneous” dynamics of movements and struggles into an organized and purposeful movement, characterized by class consciousness and the program of people’s and anti-fascist democratic revolution. This requires both overcoming the limits of subjectivity and victory in the struggle against the hegemony of opportunism and revisionism present in such movements. In this sense, we must read the “spontaneous” movements and struggles that develop under the banner of activism as an involuted and self-centered expression of the actual fundamental issues of the proletarian revolution.

At the end of the 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s in Italy, in a form incomparably more profound, acute, and extensive than what was happening in other imperialist countries at that



time, a potentially revolutionary situation developed, but the subjective conditions for the adoption of Maoism and the elaboration of Specific Thought were not yet ready, nor were the conditions for the formation and initiative of a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist communist party.

The deleterious influence of the erroneous theories and conceptions of workerist (operaista) opportunism and economism, reformism and electoralism, subjectivism and militarism was therefore significant. Instead of deepening the analysis and study of the historical nodes of the revolution in Italy in order to give them an adequate political-practical translation and a guide for the mass dynamics that tended towards revolution, these conceptions essentially denied them or gave them a distorted, anti-Gramscian and anti-Maoist interpretation.

Nevertheless, advanced proletarians, rebellious students, and combative sectors of the popular masses wrote revolutionary pages in those years, in the heat of struggle and just proletarian violence, which are part of a vital legacy of the revolutionary proletarian party that must be built today. The reasons for this situation are undoubtedly varied, including the impact of the Great Chinese Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the anti-imperialist war in Vietnam. What matters most, however, is that the extent and revolutionary radicalism of the Italian situation can only be explained by the persistence and reproduction over time of the historical issues that have characterized it for centuries. Among these, the issue of democracy and the experience of revolutionary war represented by the Resistance proved particularly



effective and decisive, even though it was distorted by opportunism and militaristic subjectivism (particularly in the second Red Brigades, which followed the repression and self-liquidation of the historical core) and essentially negated by workerism (operaismo).

The Anti-Fascist Resistance, objectively linked in content and form to the path of people's democratic revolution, gave the democratic question an irreducible dimension which, in addition to contributing to the development of a potentially revolutionary situation, was further enriched and nourished during those years, thus becoming once again, in the midst of the rising fascistization of the state, beyond any attempt by opportunist groups to deny or obscure this central and decisive fact, the objective reference model for the revolution in Italy.

Today, in the context of the precipitating general crisis of capitalism, the new offensive against oppressed peoples and small nations, the worldwide march of fascism, and the beginning of inter-imperialist war, the rebellion of oppressed peoples, young people, proletarians, and the popular masses is growing throughout the world. Every day, on the international stage, new fronts of struggle are opening up, with the proletarian and peasant masses, together with young people and petty intellectuals, taking to the streets in a growing number of countries.

A new historical phase is beginning, this time, unlike the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, destined to develop, in one way or another, in the direction of world proletarian revolution. The Palestinian people, with their heroic resistance, have probably made



a decisive contribution to the opening of this new phase, characterized by growing opposition and polarization between fascism and imperialism on the one hand and revolution on the other. Along with the Palestinian resistance, we must also consider the great influence, in a whole series of oppressed countries, of the ongoing New Democratic Revolutions, starting with the Indian one, with the recent martyrdom of its main leader, Comrade Basavaraj. The Palestinian people and the great people's wars and revolutionary struggles led by Maoist parties in oppressed countries are demonstrating that it is possible to fight and advance even in the most difficult conditions and are thus instilling awareness, courage, and determination in the masses of people around the world.



IV. PROJECT: SPECIFIC THOUGHT AND POLITICAL PRACTICE



**"Educate yourselves because we
will need all your intelligence.
Agitate yourselves because we will
need all your enthusiasm. Organize
yourselves because we will need
all your strength."**



8. POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL WORK

8.1. The synthesis of specific thought with practice

The project synthesizes the reference to the ideology of Maoism and its specification in the Italian reality with political practice in the current situation, in close relationship with advanced sectors of the masses and other revolutionary subjects.

Today, in the short term, the project concretizes the fundamental reference to Maoism and its concrete form in Italy in relation to its mission of working towards the formation of a Maoist party.

The following points therefore indicate lines of work and intervention which, in a more or less embryonic form, are already operational and therefore capable of being translated subsequently into the proposal and formation of appropriate bodies.

8.2. Committees for the anti-fascist people's democratic front

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism specified in the Italian economic, political, and historical reality indicates that the path to follow is that of the people's democratic and anti-fascist revolution on the path to socialism.

Special committees are therefore needed to build a front that, by uniting all sincere Marxist-Leninist and Maoist communists, will take on the task of propagating the need for this type of rev-



olution and working to guide and organize the mobilization of the masses towards its preparation.

It is necessary to begin this work immediately in order to explain to young people and wage earners, micro-entrepreneurs and very small producers, how and why the people's democratic revolution in our country finds its fundamental necessity in the Southern and Islands Question and in the struggle against fascism, finance capital and imperialism.

In the course of this theoretical and political work, we must combat the liquidationist viewpoint present in the radical left and the extreme left, according to which the offensive of imperialism, the fascistization of the state, and World War III would distance the prospect of proletarian revolution. This type of liquidationist position also spreads pessimism, from time to time in the service of this or that imperialism (US, Russian, Chinese, and various European states), about the prospects of the Palestinian resistance and, in general, of the revolutionary struggles and Maoist people's wars taking place on a global scale. The opposite is true. Fascism is an expression of a general crisis and a tendency toward rebellion among the masses that the bourgeoisie of all imperialist countries can no longer manage without resorting to widespread repression. Furthermore, fascism exacerbates the economic, political, and cultural oppression of the broad masses of the population to an unbelievable degree. In both cases, it prepares the conditions for the rebellion or directly triggers it. The advanced process of fascistization in Italy demonstrates that the old and rotten forms of the liberal order and the old bourgeois



parties now have little vitality or usefulness, even from the point of view of the interests of the bourgeoisie itself, which is therefore increasingly setting them aside in favor of more openly racist and fascist-populist forces.

It follows that those who believe today that opposition to the fascist government in power passes through participation in elections, support for “left-wing” lists, collusion with the corporatist and liberticidal logic of the CGIL and other confederal unions, the phantom “anti-fascist fronts” with the PD, etc., represent only the left wing of those who choose a capitulationist line in the face of the advance of fascism.

8.3. For the formation of an anti-imperialist front

An anti-imperialist front is needed, composed of special committees, which can be joined by all individuals and collectives who consider it necessary to follow the following program of work and initiative:

- 1) the struggle against US, Russian, and Chinese imperialism and against the European imperialist states, the assessment of the BRICS as a reactionary bloc subject to Russia and China, and the rejection of theories of multipolarity;
- 2) opposition to Italian imperialism in terms of its imperialist economic projection and its warmongering ventures in the Balkans, Africa, and other countries around the world;



- 3) support for national liberation wars, starting with the Palestinian resistance, which today are objectively part of the world proletarian revolution (even though, subjectively speaking, they are not yet generally characterized by proletarian leadership);
- 4) defense of small nations that do not organically belong to an imperialist political-military alliance and do not present themselves as “outposts” of the imperialist powers and are today the target of aggression by the imperialist powers (Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, Yemen, etc.);
- 5) support, in opposition to all red-brown and pro-Russian chauvinist forces, for the Ukrainian people’s right to wage war for national independence against the Western imperialist camp on the one hand and the Russian-Chinese camp on the other;
- 6) alignment with the rebellion of oppressed peoples and in particular with the people’s wars of New Democracy and the revolutionary struggles in bureaucrat-capitalist countries led by Maoist parties, which constitute the advanced part of the world proletarian revolution (India, Peru, Philippines, Turkey, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Nepal, etc.);
- 7) adoption of the aspects of the Southern Question and the Sardinian Question, which bring to the fore the question of anti-imperialism (military servitudes, hoarding of resources, environmental devastation, military-police oppression by the Italian state, etc.), and support, in close connection with the perspective



of the people's democratic revolution⁶⁵, for the claim to the right of self-determination on internationalist and anti-imperialist grounds for Sardinia itself and, possibly, for other regions of southern Italy;

8) the sharing and propagation of the thesis that the countries of Eastern Europe (including Ukraine itself) and the Balkans, previously oppressed by Russian social imperialism and currently oppressed by the US and other imperialist powers, have regressed to the situation of bureaucrat-capitalist countries, which makes national liberation and New Democratic revolution necessary.

8.4. For a class-based trade union organization

8.4.1. The importance of class struggle and trade union organization

The defense of the economic interests and living and working conditions of the working class and the lower and middle sectors of the petty bourgeoisie is one of the essential areas of struggle for the revolutionary education and organization of exploited workers, precarious workers, and unemployed.

Unlike and in contrast to other reactionary and opportunistic unions, class-based trade union struggle is promoted and directed by Maoists as part of the work for the proletarian revolution. All

⁶⁵ In the terms previously proposed, see the previous paragraphs on the Sardinian Question and the Southern Question.



this requires, in perspective, the construction of a class-based trade union and appropriate bodies for the defense and economic representation of the various exploited strata of the petty bourgeoisie. Although it is necessary to work immediately to develop, in the most appropriate forms, a class-based trade union initiative linked to the perspective of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution, no significant steps forward can be taken in this direction without first establishing the necessary subjective ideological and political conditions. A Maoist political organization capable of being present and operating on a national scale is therefore needed. In particular, it is necessary to reconstruct Gramsci's Communist Party in order to provide a real basis for the process of building a class-based trade union.

8.4.2. Economic form and political content of the class-based trade union struggle

The initiative in the field of class unionism must be based on the principle of unity between the defense of the economic interests of the proletarian masses and the revolutionary approach of this defensive initiative. We must therefore speak of the class-based union struggle and organization as characterized by the unity between an economic-union form and a revolutionary proletarian content.

Lenin had already fought a tough battle against economist and movementist opportunism, which denied the need for trade unions to be party-based and therefore for the close organizational, political, and ideological link between the communist party and the class-based trade union. It was no coincidence that the Bol-



sheviks organized separate workers' unions opposed to those of the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Liberals, and those promoted by the Tsarist police. The Third Communist International and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism were subsequently based on Lenin's conception of trade union organization and struggle, contributing to its qualitative development.

8.4.3. Economic form of class-based union struggle

In terms of form, trade union activity aims to pursue a program that defends the economic interests of workers and affirms the general principles of anti-fascism and internationalism. For example, a series of points in this program are as follows: significant wage increases; defense of jobs; reduction of working hours; safeguarding health and safety in the workplace (deaths at work, accidents and occupational diseases, harmful working environments, including in terms of stress, organizational chaos that is offloaded onto workers, etc.); for the affirmation of trade union and political rights in the workplace; for the defense of democratic rights; for support for the struggles of oppressed peoples (from the Palestinian resistance to revolutionary struggles and New Democratic Revolutions); against forms of repression affecting wage workers and the most exploited non-proletarian strata; against fascism, racism, chauvinism, and nationalism; against machismo and patriarchy; against the various imperialist powers (USA, Russia, China, European imperialist countries) and imperialist and inter-imperialist war. In terms of form, therefore, a class-based trade union program can only be the sum and synthesis of the most advanced demands and positions expressed by the economic and trade union struggles of wage earners and



the most exploited workers, at least from the late 1960s to the present. The problem of representing the economic interests of the popular masses is not limited to the proletariat (in industry, construction, or agriculture) or to exploited employees in other sectors (administration, services, commerce, and catering, etc.), but must include links with other necessary forms of organization for the defense of the immediate interests of other popular strata, such as those represented by unemployed young people, working students, various sectors of precarious workers and, in particular, exploited sectors of self-employed workers, micro-entrepreneurs or those in the lower and middle strata of small businesses (agriculture, livestock farming, street vending or similar, etc.).

8.4.4. Political content of class-based trade union struggle

The character of the class struggle waged by the Maoists is by no means limited to the form of trade union initiative. The content is not represented by a “coherent,” “complete,” or “radical” approach to the trade union struggle. The content can only be that of the specific finalization of the class struggle of the trade unions to the strategy of the Anti-fascist People’s Democratic Revolution. Specifically, it is a question of developing proletarian hegemony in the workplace. The unity between the political content and the economic form of the trade union struggle is achieved precisely in the finalization of every articulation of the class trade union initiative towards the goal of building an ideologically homogeneous class bloc of the most exploited workers



in factories and workplaces. The central question in terms of content is therefore that of building such a bloc.

8.4.5. For a critique of the workerist (“operaista”) theory of “workers’ power” (“potere operaio”)

It is necessary to combat the workerist conception and practice (related to the development of theoretical workerism and *Autonomia Operaia*) according to which it is a question of progressively developing and radicalizing the economic struggle in terms of forms of struggle and program. The formula of “workers’ power,” (“potere operaio”) which is still in vogue today among the left wing of the confederal unions and in alternative unions, is an expression of this economistic and gradualist conception. “Workers’ power” would be the expression of a certain degree of development of the balance of power in the “conflict between capital and labor” related to the field of economic and industrial action. This is a vision that denies the need for revolutionary political content in the trade union struggle and opportunistically identifies factory organizations, which are essentially economic and demand-oriented and linked to a function of defense and resistance in the face of employer and government offensives, with revolutionary political organizations. Consequently, it is also a conception of class struggle as centered on the factory or, in general, on the workplace, which are therefore seen as places from which alternative power would develop. This denies that the question of building political power is related to the formation of revolutionary front organizations, the embryo of a New State and an expression of the system of class



alliances between the proletariat and various sectors of the popular masses.

8.4.6. On the “spontaneous initiative of workers”

In an imperialist country such as Italy, particularly since the second half of the 1970s, it is not possible to determine ‘workers’ or ‘proletarian autonomy’ in the sense of spontaneity independent of specific political and trade union organizations, positions, and conceptions. Even in the most combative sectors of wage earners, precarious workers, the unemployed, agricultural laborers, etc., the hegemony of reformist trade unionism is practically absolute, taking the form above all of the initiative of the trade union left of the confederal unions and that of the various grass-roots and alternative unions.

In terms of trade union initiative, it is necessary to promote organization and mobilization in order to divert a “spontaneity” characterized by the hegemony of bourgeois and opportunist forces towards a class-based perspective, thus opposing a different approach and practice based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

8.4.7. Bourgeois hegemony in the workplace

Factories and workplaces are generally characterized not only by the domination of exploitative and commanding relationships, but also by the general political domination and hegemony of the state and the bourgeoisie. Specifically, they are subject to the economic and labor market policies of governments, the management of companies and administrations, the political and ideological conditioning of employers’ associations (e.g., Con-



findustria) and entrepreneurial and managerial groups, the labor and service-sector aristocracies, the confederal and petty-bourgeois trade unions, the political forces in power, and the initiatives of opportunist groups. These forces and actors, in conjunction with monopolistic associations, institutions, and repressive apparatuses, produce and reproduce in factories and workplaces what is a specific dimension of overall reactionary domination and hegemony. They therefore operate in the workplace with a series of objectives in mind, for example: to establish a certain system of industrial relations by reconciling employers and workers through corporate bodies; to promote the implementation of labor market policies and the economic policy measures of governments and ruling parties; to bind workers to companies and institutions; to strengthen the influence and control exercised by the labor and service-sector aristocracy; articulating the development of fascist processes in the workplace; spreading nationalism and pitting workers in the North against those in the South, “Italian” workers against immigrants and oppressed peoples or workers from other countries portrayed as competitors (e.g., China); create consensus around rearmament policies, imperialist war enterprises, and the development of inter-imperialist war, etc. Although these relations are based on the state and capitalist relations of exploitation, the bourgeois social classes and the reactionary petty-bourgeois classes (such as the labor and service-sector aristocracy), operate in factories and workplaces in terms of control, conditioning, manipulation, and blackmail, and are ultimately characterized by more or less evident and explicit degrees of “militarization.” However, bourgeois hegemony in factories and workplaces, as indeed in soci-



ety as a whole, is far from stable and compact. On the contrary, it must be continually restructured and redefined within the framework of a more or less openly competitive process between the various bourgeois organizations and forces in order to be able to operate sufficiently effectively. In fact, since it cannot truly reflect the interests of the proletariat and the popular masses, it is never an organic hegemony (unlike the proletarian one) but always a form of manipulation, a continuous deception, with the consequence that the consensus that results at the mass level is ultimately superficial, fragile, and subject to continuous and sometimes rapid erosion. This determines the fact that bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat and the popular masses is a weak link which, once broken by the initiative of the proletariat based on the scientific ideology of communism, opens the door to more advanced stages in the struggle for the establishment of a New State.

8.4.8. The class-based trade union struggle as a school of communism

The class struggle in the trade unions is not, in terms of form, a struggle against the state, and is therefore not a terrain on which the revolutionary political struggle can develop. However, the question takes on further and decisive aspects if we consider it from the point of view of content.



The class-based trade union struggle led by the Maoists is in fact a school of communism⁶⁶ because it contributes, from the point of view of its specific form, to the development of class consciousness, organization, and mobilization, and moreover, despite operating in the trade union field, it also has repercussions on the revolutionary political level.

Talking about the union as a school of communism within a capitalist society is correct if the union struggle is led by Maoists, as this highlights the contribution of the economic struggle to the breakdown of bourgeois hegemony in the workplace and the related construction of elements of proletarian hegemony.

Class-based trade union struggle goes through different phases, both as a whole and in relation to individual capitalist enterprises and individual workplaces. In an initial phase, it builds proletarian hegemony in the form, within the limits of the struggle for the defense and affirmation of the immediate interests of workers, precarious and unemployed workers and, as far as possible, other exploited sectors of dependent and self-employed labor

⁶⁶ This definition was supported by Lenin after the October Revolution in relation to the fact that, if workers were to have unions to promote the defense of their economic interests even under socialism, the main aspect, that of content, related to union initiative had to be that of its contribution to the transition to communism. Lenin's conception represented the development of the battle against revisionism and economism, which, in the name of the need to extend the influence of trade unions over workers, favored the formation of politically independent trade unions. This conception fits well with the question of the role of trade unions in socialism, in support of the preparation and promotion of Proletarian Cultural Revolutions and people's wars against capitalist restoration.



(micro-entrepreneurs, farmers, family businesses, etc.). In a subsequent phase, however, it supports the development of proletarian hegemony in the workplace. Thus, in addition to substantially undermining bourgeois hegemony over the masses of workers in factories and other workplaces, it tends to place itself on a more general level as a demand for proletarian democracy and decision-making power in the workplace and in production. In this way, the class struggle of the unions becomes a general political problem for the bourgeoisie itself and for the reactionary state, without ever being able to move beyond a framework of defense and resistance and without ever being able to build elements of political power. The latter is built, in fact, not with reference to the various workplaces or specific segments of the territory, but on a general level as a product of the initiative and political struggle of the party and therefore as the construction of the revolutionary front, whose organizations represent the embryo of the New State.

Even in its most developed and elevated phase, the class struggle led by the communists can only translate into partial and subordinate elements of proletarian hegemony, those that specifically concern the situation related to factories and workplaces. However much these elements are imbued with proletarian ideology, and however much the struggle and ideological formation of the class are in turn indispensable for a class-based trade union initiative, the question of proletarian hegemony in the workplace must not be confused with that of proletarian ideology.



8.4.9. Class-based trade union struggle and the construction of proletarian hegemony

Hegemony in the workplace is provided by a whole system of forces and relationships that structure and consolidate a certain ideological homogeneity in the relationship with certain sectors of the masses, thus adopting a directly and/or indirectly organized form. Thus, for example, even a “spontaneous” workers’ mobilization, which takes place under the influence of a confederal union, presupposes a whole gradation of organized relations between the working masses and the actual union leadership and therefore a certain degree of bourgeois hegemony. Similarly, a RSU (unitary trade union representation) of a certain factory, composed of confederal or alternative unions voted in by the workers, is indicative of the presence of a certain hegemonic configuration in that same factory.

Disrupting bourgeois hegemony, as far as the struggle to defend and assert the immediate interests of workers is concerned, therefore means proceeding with the aim of destroying, in factories and workplaces, this system of connections that work to reconcile, often in a formally peaceful manner, bosses and reactionary forces on the one hand, and the proletariat and exploited masses on the other.

Proletarian hegemony in the workplace, as far as the specific defense of the interests of exploited workers is concerned, can only be built if we are able to destroy reactionary hegemony. By advancing in destruction, we can also build.



The class-based trade union struggle is, in general, one of the indispensable ways in which the struggle against bourgeois hegemony must be waged and the struggle for proletarian hegemony must be contributed to. This approach guarantees, among other things, the maximum breadth and concrete effectiveness of the economic struggle itself.

The construction of proletarian hegemony in the workplace is something very different from what is commonly meant when the question of building a committee, a coordination group, a cobas or an RSA of some alternative union, etc., is raised. In fact, the question of the trade union struggle is generally separated from that of the struggle against bourgeois hegemony, and therefore either the latter question is considered counterproductive to the pursuit of “concrete trade union objectives,” or it is argued, in economistic terms, that the struggle for union objectives and, possibly, for the radicalization of forms of initiative is the same as the struggle for proletarian hegemony in the workplace.

Only if the strategic objective inherent in any trade union initiative is to break up the pieces and links of reactionary hegemony in the workplace can a majority class bloc be built and the right of workers to decide on all issues directly or indirectly related to their working conditions, the organization of work, health and safety, and the choices and goals of company and administrative management be affirmed.

The goal of the class-based trade union struggle led by genuinely communist forces is to achieve this kind of proletarian hegemony in the workplace. In this way, this struggle comes to repre-



sent an irreconcilable contradiction not only with the bosses, but in general with the bourgeoisie and all reactionary and opportunistic bourgeois political forces. However, it must also be clearly stated that the construction of proletarian hegemony, in individual factories and individual workplaces or in broader and more general segments of dependent, salaried or otherwise exploited labor, only creates more favorable conditions for the struggle for political power and for the concrete development of the party, the front, and the people's democratic revolution.

The question of political class struggle is by no means reduced to the irreducibility of proletarian hegemony in the workplace or to the fact that, at a certain point, its "militarization" is inevitable⁶⁷. In fact, if isolated from the overall political initiative of an effectively communist party, all this can only take on a resistant character (resistance to the boss, the government, the police who repress demonstrations, etc.) and defensive⁶⁸ (see the limits of the military experience of the factory councils and Red Guards during the Red biennium 1919-20 or that of the workers'

⁶⁷ The development of proletarian hegemony in the workplace inevitably leads to this outcome, but this does not mean that the revolution can start in the factories or have its base in factory organizations, even if they are characterized by proletarian hegemony. On the contrary, it is these organizations that are eventually strengthened and expanded by the people's revolution and consequently contribute to it.

⁶⁸ In the sense that the struggle that develops in factories and workplaces or starting from such places of exploitative relations, beyond the forms it may take, is structurally of a "defensive" nature in that it is still conditioned by its unfolding in relation to the question of labor and therefore to that of the conflict between labor and capital and not, as it needs to develop, on the terrain of hegemony and political struggle against the state.



and service-sector workers' struggles in the early 1970s, with their related forms of struggle, from sabotage to patrols, armed workers' demonstrations or the so-called 'attack on the factory command').

In summary, the concrete articulation of the trade union initiative, inasmuch as it is characterized in the workplace by the goal of destroying bourgeois hegemony and building proletarian hegemony, is closely linked to the progressive construction, not of a trade union organization in the common sense of the term, and therefore reformist and economist, but rather to the construction of a class-based bloc, a mass organization that gradually expands and is energized, albeit partially, by class consciousness and proletarian ideology. On this basis, at a certain point, the conditions may mature for this widespread mass organization to lead to the formation of specific bodies representing direct democracy for workers. The development of this bloc creates favorable conditions for further mobilizations and struggles, thus favoring the genesis of a movement that is no longer "spontaneous" but, on the contrary, the product of conscious construction and direction.

Only the dialectic between an expanding hegemonic bloc and a greater possibility for initiative, mobilization, and struggle is, within the framework of the overall direction and articulation of the Communist Party's work, the effective engine of the construction of the class-based trade union on the one hand, and of the contribution of the class-based trade union struggle to the revolutionary process on the other.



8.4.10. The organizational forms of class-based union initiative

Today, it is necessary to combine the work of training and orienting the most militant workers with the formation, where possible, of embryonic class-based trade union organizations based on a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist approach or, alternatively, with the formation of a properly organized trade union current based on democratic centralism and capable of being present and operating transversally, in essentially non-public forms, in confederal or alternative trade union organizations where useful and favorable conditions exist, represented essentially by the active and combative presence of sectors of workers.

In this second case, the forms in which this work is carried out are initially given by group or circle meetings, with the participation of the workers concerned, which must take place mainly outside the workplace. At these meetings, the most appropriate forms of action should be decided on a case-by-case basis, with a view to safeguarding the privacy of workers vis-à-vis companies and trade union leaderships, for the development of propaganda, initiative, and proselytism among workers. This trade union current must work to unify the most advanced workers on a class basis.

Outside these two alternatives represented either by embryonic trade union bodies or by the class-based trade union movement, in cases where particular situations so require, the establishment of specific associations, committees, or temporary trade union or political-trade union coordination bodies should be considered, in order to facilitate the promotion and conduct of certain



trade union struggles and disputes outside the confederal and alternative trade unions.

It is therefore necessary to form and unify an adequate Marxist-Leninist-Maoist subjectivity capable of defining and implementing this class-based trade union approach in order to organize and mobilize the trade union initiative and mobilization of the most advanced workers.

8.4.11. For an initial work and training program

The program aims, in its initial phase, to contribute to unifying and educating workers on a class basis with regard to a series of issues and questions that are currently central to political and trade union concerns. In this context, it summarizes the current lines of work aimed at promoting the dismantling of bourgeois hegemony in the workplace and the construction of proletarian hegemony.

It is therefore necessary to:

- 1) carry out propaganda and agitation activities to defend the economic interests of the most exploited workers against so-called corporate welfare and pension funds, affirming the right to full monetization of wages;
- 2) to open the battle against the growing corporatization of industrial relations in the areas of forms of representation, certification of representativeness, and bargaining rights;
- 3) denounce the militarization and fascistization of factories and workplaces with the related role of intimidation, control, and re-



pression carried out by the labor and service-sector aristocracies, the confederal unions, and the yellow unions;

4) denounce and expose the policies of conciliation between the interests of Italian imperialism and those of the most exploited workers, implemented in ways that aim to involve workers in the running of the company;

5) expose and challenge the anti-worker and anti-popular nature of renewals and agreements relating to national and, where possible, regional and company bargaining;

6) work to expose, with regard to inter-confederal agreements and contractual platforms, the use of bourgeois, reactionary, and apologetic economic theory as the basis for defining productivity indicators and legitimizing the basic parameters of current bargaining.

In order to develop class consciousness, it is necessary to accompany this initial work program with appropriate basic training on:

- a) the scientific theory of the proletariat of exploitation and the nature of wages, in order to highlight how wage increases do not affect the substance of exploitation, the perennial precariousness of the employment relationship, and the capitalist structure of working hours;
- b) the critique of the reactionary and apologetic conception of productivity as an expression of the alleged contributions to the formation of 'added value' by capital, as well as by labor;



- c) the affirmation of the Leninist theory of imperialism as the basis for an internationalist and proletarian consciousness in opposition to rearmament, military spending, imperialist war enterprises, and inter-imperialist war;
- d) the relevance of the Maoist theory of bureaucrat-capitalism in relation to countries oppressed by imperialism, as an ideological foundation for the struggle against racism and for the support of the most exploited workers in national liberation wars and New Democratic people's wars;
- e) the adequate consideration of the Southern and Islands Question in order to orient workers against the oppression that Italian imperialism, which is essentially the imperialism of Northern and Central-Northern Italy, exercises over the workers and popular masses of the South, Sicily, and Sardinia;
- f) the development of an adequate class analysis of society in order to focus on the hegemonic function of the proletariat with respect to the popular masses as a whole.

8.5. A popular movement for the liberation of women

The oppression of women is related to a condition that has existed for thousands of years, which the imperialist system, in its



terminal phase, sanctions and fuels. It began with the dissolution of primitive communism, in which the domestic economy of women played a central role in the life and reproduction of the community; hence the importance then attributed to women's work. With the emergence of commodity exchange, some branches of communist production began to become autonomous and to produce for exchange, thus accumulating a relative surplus of commodity goods. In this way, both private property and a related class of owners were formed. The latter then took over the community institutions, transforming them into a state machine at the service of their own domination. With private property came the division into antagonistic classes, the state, and the oppression of women. Prisoners became the first slaves, later joined by layers of indebted peasants. At the same time, women's domestic economy began to break down and become a subordinate part of patriarchal society. On this structural basis, the condition of women deteriorated everywhere, and from then until now, the domestic economy has become a place of ghettoization and oppression of women, while at the superstructural level, patriarchy began to form a persistent core of the ideology of the dominant reactionary classes. With the disappearance of patriarchal society based on the dissolution of primitive communism and slavery, and with the formation of feudal society, the vast majority of women of the popular masses became a marginal component of the peasant community enslaved to feudal agricultural rent. Feudal relations were expressed either in the form of village communities, forced to pay part of their harvest in tribute, or directly in the form of free servile labor performed



on the landowners' lands, or in a combination of these forms. The family of servant-workers was patriarchal in form, but no longer in substance. It was a peasant family characterized by the fact that the domestic economy of women was, on the one hand, determined by the dominance of servile labor and, on the other, a marginal expression of agrarian relations related to the work of peasants on the land entrusted to them in usufruct by the landowners or characteristic of the small, fragmented economy burdened by feudal taxes. However tenuous the relationship between the domestic economy and serfdom may have been, and however miserable and subjugated the condition of women in particular may have been, there was still an intelligible link between women's work and the economic and social relations of the time. Capitalism, at least in the imperialist countries, has eroded even this last link, and so for the first time in human history, the domestic economy has appeared to be autonomous from economic and social relations and therefore as a sphere of purely personal and private relations apparently deriving from the nuclear family. In this way, however, capitalism has highlighted that the domestic economy is no longer linked to production relations and that it is now only an expression, on the one hand, of the political and ideological needs of bourgeois domination and, on the other, of the bourgeoisie's opposition to the fundamental needs of the popular masses and therefore, in particular, to those of women with regard to the issue of catering facilities and educational, care and assistance services, housing, etc.

At the same time, capitalism has given the atomized domestic economy itself a fetishistic appearance, presenting it as a natural,



eternal relationship and, as such, sanctioned, defended, and safeguarded on a legal, cultural, ideological, educational, and police level. Capitalism projects this fetishistic appearance onto women, presenting the family domestic economy, which is a real prison for women, as a natural and necessary condition. The nuclear family itself is invested with this fetishistic appearance, and in this way, capitalism reproduces and reinforces patriarchy and male chauvinism at the superstructural level, thus opposing even the most basic rights of women (e.g., the right to abortion).

However, the nuclear family reflects the different social classes and, consequently, as far as the proletariat and the popular masses are concerned, this fetishistic appearance and, therefore, patriarchy and male chauvinism themselves come into conflict with the perception, on the part of women and men, of being subject to a common condition of exploitation and oppression. This is at least partly responsible for the generation of a sense of class solidarity within the family. The man-woman contradiction, as far as the proletariat and the popular masses are concerned, is not structurally an antagonistic contradiction, even though the bourgeoisie tries in every way to fuel it by promoting patriarchy and machismo on a political, legal, and ideological level. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feminism, by asserting the existence of an irreducible antagonism between men and women of the proletariat and the popular masses, sides with the bourgeoisie in this regard. The man-woman contradiction, as far as the popular masses are concerned, can in reality evolve or present itself in antagonistic form only because of the actions of the



bourgeoisie. Since the bourgeoisie is the ruling class, its influence in this sense is significant.

Only the organic bloc of the popular masses cemented by proletarian hegemony and therefore led by the party (affirming at every level the question of the struggle against the oppression of women) can free ever larger sectors of the masses from the antagonistic characteristics that the man-woman contradiction often assumes among the popular masses due to bourgeois political and ideological influence.

The effective liberation of women of the popular masses from their condition of oppression is inextricably linked to the struggle for the suppression of capitalism through socialism in order to achieve communism. Only communism is the expression of the complete suppression of class antagonism. At the same time, communism also leads to the fusion of the “domestic economy” with social production. The domestic economy as such, and therefore as a place where services are provided by women, will thus disappear completely.

Maoism raises the banner of women’s liberation more profoundly and comprehensively than any form of feminism, affirming that the question of women’s oppression and the struggle against male chauvinism and patriarchy is a central aspect in the training of leading cadres and militants.

The struggle for women’s liberation is an integral part of the revolution and, in socialism, of the Great Proletarian Cultural Rev-



olutions and the people's wars against the new bourgeoisie, its influence, and its attempts to restore capitalism.

Today, special committees are needed to achieve, on the basis of a correct Maoist approach, the formation of a people's movement for the liberation of women. Therefore, the question of defining the ideological basis and delimiting it from all other opportunist positions related to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feminism that exist today within women's movements is of particular and primary importance for the establishment of such committees. Only once the necessity of the primacy of Maoism as the guide for the women's liberation struggle has been clarified can the actual process of building a popular women's movement begin.

8.6. For a class-based approach to the LGBTQ+ question

8.6.1. Fighting against the oppression of the LGBTQ+ community

The LGBTQ+ community is currently one of the most oppressed social groups by the Italian bourgeois state. In addition to institutional persecution in the form of discriminatory laws and reactionary and patriarchal propaganda, members of this community commonly suffer continuous discrimination in the workplace, deprivation of healthcare, and verbal and physical aggression that often results in acts of open violence. The current advance



of fascism on a global scale, starting with the fascistization of the state in response to the general crisis of capitalism and the trend towards world proletarian revolution (particularly evident in the vast majority of countries oppressed by imperialism: the US, Russia, China, major European countries, etc.), makes oppression of the LGBTQ+ community irreversible within the capitalist system. This is accentuating it in an increasing manner and leading to the prospect of a future of fascist pogroms and detention camps in line with the development of inter-imperialist war.

8.6.2. The LGBTQ+ community has a particular interest in the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution

In Italy, the situation is characterized by the advance of the fascistization and corporatization of the state and society, by a government that is moving towards the crystallization of a fascist-police regime, and by a general offensive against the rights and interests of the proletariat and the exploited strata of the petty bourgeoisie, the popular masses of the South and the Islands, women, young people, the LGBTQ+ community, and immigrants. This situation, with the policies of rearmament and the arrogant and aggressive projections of Italian imperialism (in Africa, the Balkans, and other areas of “crisis”), is moving in the direction of ever-greater participation by the Italian state in the development of inter-imperialist war. Only a new resistance, an Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution, can oppose all this and defeat fascism, war, and imperialism in Italy.



Although the LGBTQ+ community is also characterized by divisions into social classes with mutually antagonistic interests and perspectives, there is also a general interest among members of this community in the prospect of a People's Democratic Revolution and the consequent revolutionary organization and militancy.

Ultimately, the main issue today is the impossibility of resolving peacefully and in a reformist way the contradiction inherent in a capitalist system which, in the current terminal phase of the imperialist system, produces all forms of oppression and discrimination, fueling fascism, nationalism, racism, and philosophical and cultural irrationalism. It is therefore necessary to affirm that only through a People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism can a process be initiated aimed at the real emancipation of the members of this community, an emancipation that is an integral part of that of the proletariat and the popular masses of our country.

The decades-long experience of Maoists in various countries around the world, particularly the Filipino Maoists, has highlighted the revolutionary potential inherent in the discrimination and oppression of members of the proletariat and the popular masses of this community. It is necessary for a revolutionary organization worthy of the name to fight for the emancipation of the popular masses and all social realities subject to forms of oppression and discrimination.



8.6.3. The need for a political-ideological battle in the far left and in social centers

The battle to affirm the perspective of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution as the path to the emancipation of members of the LGBTQ+ community and to oppose any attempt to sanction the exclusion of a person on the basis of their preferences and sexual orientation or gender identity is particularly relevant in the field of the "radical left," alternative trade unionism, the so-called far left, and realities such as those of various social centers.

In particular, it is necessary to thoroughly combat the influences of machismo, patriarchy, and bourgeois liberal feminism, which inevitably merge with revisionist and opportunistic bureaucracy in an attempt to counteract the need for the formation of the communist party.

8.6.4. Opposing red-brownism, an expression of the influence of fascism

It is necessary to fight against the forces and role of red-brown ideologies linked to Russian imperialism and Chinese social fascism and social imperialism which, in line with the trends of world fascism well represented by Trump on the one hand and Putin on the other, define homosexuality, among other things, as a manifestation of ideological and moral decadence. In this context, it is also a question of combating those conceptions which, with a mechanistic approach of an irrationalist and idealist na-



ture that sometimes tries to disguise itself as “materialism,” spread transphobic theories.

8.6.5. For a class-based political alignment

Although members of the LGBTQ+ community are characterized by a condition of oppression, it is clear that there is a tangible division into antagonistic social classes within the community. The oppression they suffer from is much heavier and more decisive when it affects members of this community who are of proletarian and working-class origin and status. In this fundamental sense, it is not even possible to speak properly of an “LGBTQ+ community” as indicative of a common general condition and a related full unity of interests and intentions. Therefore, in this context, the very term ‘community’ refers, to borrow a category expounded by Marx and Engels in 1846 in *The German Ideology*, to a simply ‘formal’ community.

Various members of this “formal community,” due to their class status and political and ideological choices, belong to the bourgeoisie, have collaborated and continue to collaborate with the processes of fascistization of the state, with preparations for war and imperialist enterprises, with the offensive against the living and working conditions of the popular masses, and are also supporters of reactionary and post-modern ideologies. Within forces such as the Democratic Party and AVS, these individuals work to assimilate LGBTQ+ demands, presenting them as issues of individual inclusion, in order to passivize the potential for rebellion and revolutionary opposition. In the name of demanding certain civil rights, they work to legitimize the actions of reac-



tionary institutions and the state. The oppression of the LGBTQ+ community is thus used as a basis for building consensus and, ultimately, for reproducing the same relations of oppression that are imposed on the majority belonging to the popular masses of the same “formal community.”

8.6.6. Dialectical materialism and militancy

Dialectical materialism maintains that all individuals belong to social classes and that there is an irreconcilable antagonism between the proletariat and the masses on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other, which can only be resolved through revolution and the establishment of a new state and a new society. In this context, the concept of “class” implies several levels: 1) **class origin**, generally represented by the social stratum or class of the family of origin; 2) **class condition**, which refers to the social stratum or social class that materially characterizes the present situation; 3) **the ideological positioning or affiliation of class**, understood as the ideological outcome of a succession of choices that lead to an identification, albeit tending to be relevant to a short-to-medium-term phase, with the condition and fundamental interests of a particular class or social stratum. On average and as a general outcome, class origin and class condition are decisive. In the course of building the party and developing the revolutionary process, it is in fact on this class basis that, as far as the proletariat and the popular masses are concerned, we have a growing correspondence with the ideological dimension of consciousness and revolutionary militancy and practice. With regard to the issue of individual subjectivity and therefore that of the selection and recruitment of potential mili-



tants for the revolution and Maoism, however, the question of class positioning also becomes relevant. Class character from an individual point of view must therefore be considered not only in terms of class origin and condition, but also in terms of class positioning. This means that it is also necessary to consider the possibility or the fact of a gap between these three dimensions. This occurs, for example, when the proletariat tends to identify with the bourgeoisie and therefore manifests a bourgeois class positioning and belonging. However, it can also occur when a member of the bourgeoisie identifies with the proletariat and ideologically and practically renounces their class of origin or social status.

Identification with the proletariat, with its fundamental interests and its historical role, is a problem that can only be resolved through organized Maoist militancy and active participation in the mass revolutionary process. In this framework is the dimension of ideological and political-practical positioning in the class struggle and in the contradiction between reaction and revolution, which establishes and resolves the question of class identification. It is on the basis of class positioning that the core of individual subjectivity and therefore also of “personal identity” is constituted and possibly redefined in the course of the development of the class struggle itself. Class, therefore, is the element that characterizes individual subjectivity, not gender identity or sexual preferences.

All this highlights the need to fight to affirm and safeguard unity on a class basis, thus countering the attempts that, on different fronts, reactionaries and post-modern liberals are making with



the aim of dividing the proletariat and the popular masses on the basis of issues related to gender identity and sexual preferences. In the organizations and political activity of Maoists and the revolutionary proletariat, the LGBTQ+ question cannot therefore play a divisive role.

8.7. For a national Maoist youth organization

8.7.1. The oppression that weighs on young people and students

The general crisis of capitalism has deepened all social contradictions and thrown vast sectors of the popular masses, particularly in the South and the Islands, into a situation at the poverty line. Young people are strongly affected by this type of situation. The current condition of young people in the proletariat and the popular masses in Italy has changed significantly for the worse compared to forty or fifty years ago. Given the particularly high unemployment rate, especially in the South and on the Islands, young people are finding it increasingly difficult to find a job that guarantees them sufficient income for economic independence and can only hope for forms of super-exploitation, precarious employment, and undeclared work. One of the not insignificant consequences of this situation is economic dependence on their families of origin, with a corresponding burden on the family situation, which is already generally problematic. This is combined, as far as young people from the popular masses attending high school or university are concerned, with an educational system that is increasingly classist and therefore discrim-



inatory and oppressive towards students whose class origin is similar to that of the proletariat. One aspect of this classist character is the fact that school education is characterized by the promotion of a humanistic culture that lacks historical context and critical thinking and is therefore increasingly dry and mystifying. In terms of scientific subjects, on the other hand, there is a huge gap between the desirable goal of training experts and technicians to carry out effective tasks and functions of social and collective interest. The structural characteristics of a class-based school and university system, where everything is geared towards the domination of the bourgeoisie, its reproduction as the hegemonic class, and the absorption, from a technical and intellectual point of view, of the most promising and capable elements of the popular masses, are compounded by a narrowly pragmatic ‘cultural’ framework and context, oriented in an idealistic-subjective and irrationalist sense and increasingly tinged with nationalism and militarism. It is no coincidence that educational institutions are increasingly intertwined with large monopolies, arms production, and military and police apparatuses, and therefore also with the war against oppressed peoples, with inter-imperialist war, and, in general, with the fascistization of the state. In schools and universities, democratic spaces and rights are also denied, and authoritarianism seems to reign supreme. Student protests, demonstrations, and rebellions are subject to denunciation and police repression, both inside and outside educational institutions. However, this does not only affect young people from the popular masses. Even a minority of students from the privileged petty bourgeoisie are oppressed by this



ignoble situation and this despicable subculture and tend to rebel and potentially question their own origins and class condition.

Precariousness and unemployment, classist schools and universities, school subculture, corporatism, contempt for the real problems and actual needs of the masses, scorn for students' needs for knowledge and cultural and intellectual growth, militarism, and repression are the main ingredients of a situation which, despite growing protests and rebellions, has not yet found an organic outlet, and consciously directed towards the formation of a revolutionary communist youth organization aiming at radical political, economic, cultural, and moral change.

8.7.2. The necessary class identification with the proletariat

Only in a still very limited number of cases does the oppression suffered by most young people and students translate into conscious identification with the proletariat and its historical function as the only class with the potential to lead and exercise hegemony over the bloc of the popular masses.

If class origin is an objectively given element and if class condition is related to the social and material situation that effectively characterizes young people considered on an individual level, "class positioning" is instead a process in which the subjective choices made from time to time are combined with a specific ideological alignment, thus translating into identification with a specific social class. All young people must choose whether to identify with the condition, interests, and revolutionary perspective of the proletariat or, conversely, whether to identify with the



condition, lifestyle, customs, ideology, and interests of this or that privileged stratum of the bourgeoisie. Young people from the proletariat and the popular masses, as well as rebellious young people from the bourgeoisie, are therefore faced with the problem and task of achieving this class identification as the center of their own “personal identity.” Among young people from the popular masses, we often see a difficult and convoluted relationship with this task, resulting in an unstable and contradictory identification characterized by the coexistence of layers and levels of ideology from different and opposing classes. This process is often marked by fragmentation and fluidity, and is therefore susceptible to the influence of practices, behaviors, attempts at ideological and moral corruption, and reactionary concepts and models. This ranges from the influence of the paternalism of the Catholic left and aristocratic liberalism towards the exploited and oppressed classes and peoples, to the idealization and crude practical imitation of the lifestyles, behaviors, and sexual and family customs of the privileged petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie (which often reproduce, on a more disguised and hypocritical level, the worst individualistic and antisocial characteristics of the lumpenproletariat, including micro-criminality). Similarly, this sometimes leads to patriarchy and machismo, discrimination against LGBTQ+ communities, and even more openly to bullying, racism, and nationalism.

8.7.3. Ideological, material, and emotional dependence on the family

As regards the relationship between young people from the popular masses and their families of origin, it is common to find not



only economic dependence on their parents, but also, in a broader sense, emotional and cultural dependence.

The atomized domestic economy merges with what can be defined as the “family economy” relating to the management of the nuclear family’s income. All of this tends to take on a generally fetishistic character, as if the nuclear family consisted of an entity governed by interests, norms, and affections devoid of social and class connotations. The nuclear family thus tends to present itself and operate mechanically as an alienated and alienating community microcosm, adding to the myriad institutions, apparatuses, organizations, and associations that bourgeois society safeguards, nurtures, and promotes in terms of its hegemonic domination.

In this fetishistic framework, it is socially taken for granted that young people must meet the expectations of their family of origin.

Although class contradiction is also reflected in young people and there is therefore a basis for the development of a critical consciousness towards their own personal history and family situation, the scarcity of critical thinking and culture available to young people on average, together with the lack of a significant and widespread Maoist youth organization, makes young people particularly susceptible to the influence of reactionary worldviews.

8.7.4. Bourgeois divisions of subjectivity



The condition of oppression that characterizes the situation of young people and the various aspects related to the relationships of dependence in which they are immersed, in the context of the influence of an increasingly reactionary and decadent bourgeois and petty-bourgeois culture, also favor a view of the body as an object of exploitation aimed at narcissistic enjoyment (think of addictions, excessive concern with image, the maniacal practice of selfies, the involuted model of communication that commonly characterizes the use of social media, or forms such as anorexia and bulimia). Similarly, it encourages the separation of sexuality and emotion and fuels a conception of eroticism linked to the repetitive consumption of experiences and emotions as an end in itself, a process that cannot therefore translate into effective personal and ideological maturation. These aspects can easily translate into behaviors, moods, and experiences similar to bipolar disorder (alternating between depressive states and feelings of omnipotence) and “acting out” (decisions made on the basis of emotions and moods that are often occasional, not preceded by adequate reflection, and not accompanied by effective communication).

In this way, bourgeois ideology also tends to influence the most intimate and personal spheres, promoting individualism as much as possible.

8.7.5. The Maoist youth organization: a response to the contradictions faced by young people

The Maoist youth organization, characterized by political militancy aimed at preparing for the proletarian revolution, is the ba-



sis for the adoption of an advanced moral and intellectual conception of the world and for the related revolutionary cultural transformation. All this represents an overall necessity for young people who aspire to effective rebellion, knowledge, and a critically oriented education in the service of the interests and needs of the exploited masses and oppressed peoples. Only the ideology of the proletariat and its practical and organizational implementation indicate and make possible a way out of the various contradictions that characterize the current condition of the youth of the popular masses and the most democratic, anti-fascist, and revolutionary youth of the bourgeoisie itself. The youth of the popular masses and the rebellious youth of the bourgeoisie can identify with the proletariat, build a class and personal identity that is opposed to and incompatible with that of the bourgeoisie, and satisfy their vital needs for growth and intellectual education only by actively participating in the many activities of an organized collective that aims, in general terms, to develop with the construction of the party and the beginning of the New Resistance for the affirmation of a New State and a new culture and society. It is therefore necessary for young communists to organize themselves by uniting under the banner of Maoism in appropriate collectives, associations, and committees linked to an adequate ideological vision and a corresponding strategic and political practice.



8.8. The need for art at the service of the proletariat and the popular masses

8.8.1. For a revolutionary culture

Culture is an ideological reflection of the political and economic system that prevails in a given society, its social classes, and its fundamental contradictions. Communists, applying dialectical materialism, must adopt the task of affirming a progressive and revolutionary worldview, the worldview of the proletariat.

In the imperialist system, the bourgeoisie has long since lost any progressive role or function and has become a conservative class in all areas of economic, political, social, and intellectual life. In imperialist countries, the liberal-reactionary bourgeoisie is hegemonic and, as the general crisis of capitalism deepens, is increasingly tending toward fascism. Bourgeois art is therefore reactionary, and intellectuals in the service of the bourgeoisie cannot express a progressive point of view on art. However, this also applies to a significant part of the so-called left. The various opportunist and revisionist tendencies express not only a political line, but also a cultural line that is alien and often opposed to the interests of the proletariat and the popular masses. Consequently, just as we must distance ourselves from their political line, which is only progressive in appearance, we must do the same about their cultural line and practice. Therefore, there can be no progressive art in imperialist countries that is not linked to the proletariat and the oppressed masses and that, in its highest and



most developed expression, does not relate to Maoism. So, it is either bourgeois art or proletarian art.

Communists have the historic task of leading the process of transforming this economic and political system according to the worldview of the proletariat.

Cultural policy is an articulation of the more general political line of the proletariat and serves its purposes. This implies a bitter struggle between proletarian and socialist ideology and culture on the one hand and liberal-reactionary and fascist ideology and culture on the other. This struggle is one of the necessary fronts of the class struggle.

Summarizing the historical experience of the ICM, Mao states: *“Revolutionary culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution. People engaged in revolutionary cultural work are the commanders at various levels on this cultural front.”*

Quoting Lenin’s principle *“Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement,”* Mao adds: *“one can thus see how important the cultural movement is for the practical revolutionary movement.”* [Mao Tse-tung, *The Culture of New Democracy* - January 1940].

The struggle on the agenda in our country for the construction of a people’s democratic state on the path to socialism also requires a movement of struggle on the anti-fascist, anti-imperial-



ist, and internationalist cultural front of the proletariat, the popular masses, and the petty intellectuals and, in close connection with this, a specific struggle for a proletarian conception of art against the decadent and reactionary conception of art of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The question of art is part of what Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* called “intellectual and moral reform.”

8.8.2. The question of art as part of Intellectual and Moral Reform

The question of intellectual and moral reform, from a general point of view, is that of ideology, of the general conception of the world of the proletariat seen in connection with all aspects of social life (politics, economics, history, science, cultural and artistic life, etc.). According to Gramsci, the bourgeoisie, in its formative and developmental stages, needed a conception of the world that corresponded to its interests.

The ideology of the proletariat is therefore the conception of the world corresponding to the interests of the proletariat, serving to counter the ideology of the bourgeoisie and to form cadres that generate a worldview capable of directing the masses in a revolutionary direction.

Addressing this issue from a historical perspective, Gramsci points out that in Europe, a progressive worldview led to the French Revolution and, in Germany, to the Protestant Reformation. This was possible because a new class had formed, the bourgeoisie. In Italy, however, there was no revolutionary bourgeoisie, and consequently it did not contribute to this direction.



While France, with the Jacobin revolution, and Germany, with the Protestant Reformation, drastically reduced the presence and influence of Catholicism, the same did not happen in Italy.

In France and Germany, the bourgeoisie, which had become economically dominant, albeit in different forms, had an interest in establishing a worldview that served a process centered on the suppression of the feudal economic and political system. Gramsci therefore points to these two countries as examples of a bourgeois revolution that has yet to be achieved in Italy. If we look at their history, we cannot fail to notice, unlike in Italy, a lively intellectual and political ferment.

This ferment subsequently generated the flourishing and spread of a higher culture, classical German philosophy with the development of dialectics which, once purified of philosophical idealism and based on materialism, reached its most rational and elevated expression in Marxism.

France saw a great intellectual and moral reform in the 18th century with the Enlightenment, which attempted to replace religion with a completely secular ideology, represented by the national bond ensured by the participation of the large peasant masses, and which prepared the way for the revolution at the end of the century. The French revolutionary and cultural process was in turn fertile ground for subsequent developments: on a theoretical and cultural level, the first projects for radical economic and political transformation linked to the early forms of utopian socialism which, although not yet scientifically based, expressed the immediate needs of the proletarian masses; at the political level,



the first attempt to achieve people's power with the glorious revolutionary movement that gave rise to the Paris Commune.

In Italy, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie always avoided aligning itself with the peasant masses against the feudal system represented by the Church and the large landowners. Thus, a backward phase of feudalism continued for centuries, with the communes on one side and the papacy on the other colluding to maintain a regressive situation, i.e., inhibiting the political, economic, and “intellectual and moral” development of the peninsula. The Italian Risorgimento itself, overall, pursued the traditional regressive line and, in addition to being anti-Jacobin, avoided completing the annexation of the Papal States⁶⁹. The unification of Italy was a passive revolution. On a cultural level, this meant that, from the formation of the bourgeois state, the ideological matrix was always liberal-reactionary and at the same time marked by collusion with Catholicism. It was therefore characterized from the outset by an aristocratic, culturalist, paternalistic, rhetorical, and nationalist approach. Italian intellectuals have done nothing but reflect all this in their work⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ The reactionary liberal forms in which Italian unification was achieved are also the result of the role played by the Risorgimento left, which supported Cavour's liberal right and the Savoy monarchy and did not raise the issue of independent action on behalf of the peasant masses. In this way, the Action Party (Partito d'Azione) was not even a party independent of large landowners.

⁷⁰ As a consequence of this type of formation of the Italian state, as a historical-political process separated from the popular masses, there was a lack of true national literature, resulting from the disconnection from the masses and their history and culture linked to production and class struggle,



This situation has been perpetuated and deepened with Italy's entry into the phase of imperialism, with fascism and with the entire phase following the end of World War II, and, in certainly different forms, it continues to characterize almost all Italian intellectuals today.

To truly address this situation, a political, economic, social, and cultural revolution is needed. It is up to the proletariat to resolve the intellectual and moral question through the affirmation, under the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and dialectical materialism, of an effective progressive culture that is truly democratic, internationalist, and proletarian.

Regarding the question of art as an integral part of the necessary Intellectual and Moral Reform, Gramsci addresses it above all in relation to literature.

In his view, it is not enough to bring a series of artistic skills into play. At the basis of the aesthetic elaboration of a work of art, there must be adequate social class content that is an effective expression of the deepest feelings and aspirations of the popular strata. However, this is an aspect that cuts across all artistic forms, not just literature. Art is one of the areas of ideology in which the Party works to affirm and articulate the proletariat's conception of the world.

The implementation of the Intellectual and Moral Reform must involve two distinct fundamental stages which, as the process of

over which pure domination had always been exercised, even from a hegemonic point of view.



definition and revolutionary struggle advances, will run parallel and simultaneously intertwine.

The first stage, related to the reflection of the class struggle on a theoretical level, is that of ideological activity for the formation of a new type of cadre aimed at the vanguards participating in the construction and activity of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Communist Party. Part of this activity is the struggle for the affirmation of materialist dialectics as the scientific theory of the proletariat and the popular masses against other philosophical tendencies, in particular subjective idealism, engaged in a visceral attack against conceptions that refer to materialism and objective dialectics and especially against historical-dialectical materialism. Historical-dialectical materialism is a scientific conception that affirms the need for a reflection of reality that is not passive, contemplative, and photographic, but rather a reproduction of it oriented towards revolutionary practice.

The second phase of the Intellectual and Moral Reformation, which represents a necessary contribution to the class struggle, is linked in the broadest sense of the term to cultural policy aimed at the masses. As we have said, an important branch of cultural policy is artistic production. Art is a form of expression which, from the point of view of dialectical materialism, is connected to the tradition of artistic realism and refers to a form of objective representation of reality considered as a developing contradiction. For communists, therefore, the question of art is inextricably linked to the problem of knowledge and, consequently, artistic representation is a specific mode of cognition in that, by reproducing reality, circulates knowledge. It follows that



this field cannot escape the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism.

8.8.3. Art as a philosophical question

When addressing the question of the work of art from the perspective of literary, cinematographic, and theatrical production, the question of ideology must be addressed.

One cannot raise the question of art in the service of the proletariat and the masses without assuming that, from an ideological point of view, the question of art is fundamentally a philosophical one. It is therefore inherent, on the one hand, to dialectical materialism and its application and, on the other, to the struggle against bourgeois philosophy that dominates imperialism.

In the decadent phase of imperialism, subjective idealism is the true foundation of ideology, philosophy, and reactionary imperialist culture. In the field of subjective idealism, classical philosophy as an investigation into the nature of things no longer exists, but trends are hegemonic, often similar to each other in terms of their basic concepts, represented by neo-positivism and the Nietzsche-Heidegger line that founded post-modernism.

8.8.4. The conception of art in neopositivism

Neopositivism developed at the end of the 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th century as a revision, under the influence of neo-Kantianism, of the previous philosophy of science based on mechanism. The rejection of materialism and the attack on objective dialectics is very marked and evident here in



the technical and formalistic approach taken by logic, mathematics, and, in general, the natural sciences. It is precisely this current philosophy of science and mathematics that, combining empiricism with formal logic, strives to give coherence to thought. While maintaining that everything that is asserted must be verified in experience, logical empiricism claims to derive solutions from the analysis of many empirical cases that would confirm a given assumption and, consequently, lead to a given thesis. According to logical empiricism, when new experiences contradict previous ones, we can accept them as valid and fundamental, revising the theory, which is now considered erroneous. This continues until the latter is also challenged by new experiences, and so on.

It is a form of subjective idealism that exalts the immediacy of empirical experience as the truth and object of knowledge. This is in opposition to materialism, which instead asserts that the starting point is not immediate experience, in which by definition a clear line of distinction between object and subject disappears, but objective reality as it presents itself to the subject.

In this framework, logical empiricism never recognizes the possibility and necessity of a universal truth as the result of a full correspondence between objective reality and the reproduction of that reality in theoretical consciousness. The whole thing therefore resolves itself into a form of logical-formal relativism.

The reflection of this approach regarding the question of art is that logical empiricism denies that art can represent a valid form of reflection of reality and its contradictions. Consequently, all



artistic forms and productions are contrasted in absolute terms with “science.” In particular, logical empiricism considers the dialectical materialist view of art to be primarily mystifying and deleterious, in that the latter is affected by a metaphysical and totalitarian claim to represent a truth that is impossible to verify on the basis of the procedures and methods of formal logic.

While logical empiricism seeks to destroy the influence of dialectical materialism in all fields, including the arts, it simultaneously assumes that art has social value as an expression of symbolic productions, emotions and subjective experiences, presumed social and religious values, etc.

8.8.5. Heidegger’s ultra-reactionary line

The ultra-reactionary Heidegger set himself the task of ‘philosophically’ establishing conceptions of artistic work that are still common and widespread even among those who are unfamiliar with this Nazi ideologue and who may declare themselves to be progressive, anti-fascist, or ‘communist’ on a political level.

In the field of Heideggerian irrationalism, we start from the apparent, superficial, and instrumental criticism of certain approaches to the question of the creation of a work of art: 1) that of the work of art conceived as the result of the free expression of the artist’s subjectivity; 2) that seen as aimed at the construction of an object intended to be consumed on the level of aesthetic enjoyment.

Heidegger criticizes these conceptions because he considers them compromised by a world viewed as an object of knowledge



and representation. For Heidegger, this vision affirms the primacy of an “ontic world,” that is, an inauthentic world.

Heidegger actually aims only to re-propose, in even more extreme and subjectivist terms, these approaches to the work of art conceived as an expression of the artist’s subjectivity and as the construction of an object intended for aesthetic enjoyment.

According to the ultra-reactionary Heidegger, art must oppose the representation of the objective world in favor of the possibility that the “authentic presupposition of that world” may present itself and shine through in politics, philosophy, and, indeed, in works of art. In this way, the theme of the relationship between ‘ontic’ and ‘ontological’ and the characteristic split between these categories proposed by Heideggerian irrationalism translate into a distorted and inverted vision of the objective world which, from being an effective foundation, declines into phenomenon, appearance and obscurity of the so-called ‘being’. Heidegger’s being is the Subject that would nourish the tradition and identity of peoples and mark their destiny. According to the Nazi Heidegger, the artist, together with the “philosopher” (conceived as the true guide of the state),⁷¹ is the one who, abhorring the inauthentic logic of the “ontic world,” would be able to enter directly into a relationship with being and become its representative and guardian. In this way, ‘being’ presents itself as a sort of subjective spirit that distinguishes the original essence of the

⁷¹ Heidegger aspired to be the ideological and spiritual leader of Nazism, thus competing with Hitler himself, and also leaned towards the more distinctly ‘red-brown’ wing of Nazism, hence his relative and growing marginalization.



world. The Christian divinity reappears in a pseudo-objective and falsely atheistic form.

All the reactionary themes of subjective idealism, the theology of the Holy Inquisition, and the aristocratic-feudal counterrevolution (it is no coincidence that theology is the basis of Heidegger's "intellectual formation") are taken up by Heidegger and adapted to the needs of the terminal phase of imperialism, fascism, and imperialist war, particularly in terms of viscerally nationalistic and racist content.

Through 'intuition,' the artist is said to be the one who is able to 'reveal being' and therefore the bearer of authentic art. Heidegger's supposed criticism of the subjectivist and psychological conception of art actually translates into a sort of aristocratic and ultra-subjectivist conception of art. Artists trained in Heidegger's school feel like they are chosen ones, preachers of 'being'.

Commonly, this type of position is reflected in the ideas of those "artists" who believe that art based directly on intuition, conceived in opposition to reason and therefore to the active elaboration of ideology, can express the hidden "truth" of the world. Sometimes these "artists" also attack those trends that believe that aesthetics and the work of art should have their center in the pursuit of "beauty" and therefore aim to propose forms, sometimes even formally refined, that present themselves in their cryptic character and therefore often of a provocative and snobbish type.



Heidegger's aesthetics, which apparently criticizes not only "subjectivism" but also formalism understood as the promotion of "art for art's sake," attributes particular importance to artistic form as a dimension capable of promoting the "unveiling of being." In this way, Heidegger himself actually proposes a sort of formalism taken to the extreme. The following quote from an article by the reactionary postmodern ideologue Gianni Vattimo (1936-2023)⁷² highlights this aspect of Heidegger's conception: *"The work of art in fact opens up a new 'era' of being; as an absolutely original event that cannot be reduced to what already was, it establishes a new order of relationships between entities, a truly new world. That is why, if there is a term that can define the reader's encounter with the work, this term for Heidegger is that of Stoss, shock or jolt: the work of art produces in the reader a suspension of all normal relationships, making everything that had seemed obvious and habitual up to that point seem strange."* [emphasis added; *L'origine dell'opera d'arte di Heidegger e il problema della verità*, Ed. G.B. Paravia, 1995; the text includes

⁷² Author of the book *Comunismo ermeneutico: Da Heidegger a Marx* (Hermeneutic Communism: *From Heidegger to Marx*, 2014), among others, he is a pseudo-philosopher highly regarded by PD supporters, neo-workerists, red-browns, and other opportunistic groups for his support of so-called left-wing governments in Latin America run by factions of bureaucrat-capitalism. For a critical review of the book *Hermeneutic Communism*, see Nuova Egegnia: *A proposito di Vattimo: il comunismo ermeneutico è una filosofia rosso-bruna* <https://nuovaegemonia.com/2023/09/20/a-proposito-di-vattimo-comunismo-ermeneutico-una-filosofia-rosso-bruna/>. See also the article by Per La Democrazia Popolare "Let's boycott the celebrations for Vattimo planned by the Liceo Gioberti in Turin" <https://www.perlademocraziapopolare.com/boicottiamo-le-celebrazioni-di-vattimo-programmate-dal-liceo-gioberti-di-torino/>



Heidegger's essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* and the above quotation is taken from G. Vattimo's contribution to the section on 'Debate'].

8.8.6. Against "left-wing" postmodernism

We find in Heidegger's conception of the work of art as "*shock or jolt*" one of the roots of left-wing postmodernist tendencies regarding the question of the thematization and production of the work of art. This is in relation to the question of art forms conceived as a privileged place for a possible deconstruction of common artistic conceptions and practices. The need to prioritize the problem of adequately elaborating content is therefore rejected, and instead the possibility of breaking with and dismantling customs, with a related presumed innovative function, is attributed to structure, method, technology, language, the search for particular pragmatic effects, etc.

All the different shades of opportunistic forces on the radical left and far left, on a philosophical and therefore cultural level, in Italy are linked to subjective idealism. This is because their empiricist and formalist philosophical conception of a "neo-positivist" nature combines, to a greater or lesser extent, with developments and articulations of the second trend in the philosophy and culture of imperialist decadence, that characterized by the Nietzsche-Heidegger line.

Subjective idealism in the philosophical field, particularly that reflected in postmodernism, is the conception that best reflects the decadence and ultra-reactionary and conservative vocation of the bourgeoisie in the terminal phase of imperialism. This



conception starts mainly from the fascist Nietzsche-Heidegger line and then takes on disparate forms, ranging from fascism to the radical and opportunistic ‘left’. In the latter case, it draws on the contribution of ‘liberal left’ intellectuals, who like to present themselves as progressive, pluralist, and “against all forms of totalitarianism” and ‘fascism’, but who in reality aim to carry out a thorough attack on the proletariat and communist ideology, thus opening the way for the affirmation of fascism.

In this context, representatives of the PD and M5S, together with officials from the trade union left and alternative unions, pacifist, environmentalist, and non-profit associations, bourgeois feminists, and recycled former 1968 activists have played and continue to play a significant political and ideological role in the now advanced processes of social corporatization.

The need to develop and spread “class consciousness,” proletarian culture, and the formation of an effective communist party to lead the mass revolutionary movement for the construction of a people’s democratic state is thus opposed by a reactionary conception in the service of a false opposition policy, which aims to reconcile contradictions and promote a hegemonic shield against the possibility of class positions and conflicts emerging and developing.

8.8.7. On the relationship between form and content in realist art

The ideological content of the conflicts of reactionary societies divided into classes is always represented by the struggle between the dominated class seeking to emerge and assert itself



and the old ruling class seeking to preserve its power at all costs. In today's situation, the content is given in all fields by the struggle for hegemony of the proletariat and the oppressed peoples against the ruling class of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. A militant work of art must be based on this content. Therefore, once the content aspect has been considered, it is necessary to address the question of aesthetic form. A work of art is complete when it achieves a full correspondence between the form and the content it seeks to represent.

The following note from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* is significant for understanding this relationship:

"... It can be said that those who insist on 'content' are in fact fighting for a particular culture, for a particular conception of the world against other cultures and other conceptions of the world; it can also be said that historically, until now, the so-called contentists have been 'more democratic' than their Parnassian opponents, for example, in that they wanted literature that was not for 'intellectuals', etc. Can we speak of a priority of content over form? We can speak of it in this sense, that a work of art is a process and that changes in content are also changes in form, because content can be 'summarized' logically. When we say that content precedes form, we simply mean that, in the elaboration, successive attempts are presented under the name of content, nothing else. The first content that was unsatisfactory was also form, and in reality, when a 'satisfactory form' was achieved, the content also changed." (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Q 14 note 72, Popular Literature. Content and Form) [Our translation]



Applying dialectical materialism to the problem of art, the artist's relationship with content and aesthetic form is no longer seen as divided, but as a work that, based on the development of adequate content, is gradually resolved in the organicity of the realist work of art. As Gramsci says, “...*form and expression coincide, and insisting on ‘form’ is nothing more than a practical means of working on content.*” (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Q 14 note 72, Popular Literature. Content and Form) [Our translation]

8.8.8. The work of art: realism vs. irrationalism

Art, especially in cinema, theater, and literature, often starts from “singularity,” that is, from the representation of situations and events that highlight certain relationships between a set of individual subjectivities. Although characterized by a representation of reality focused on the representation of roles, events, and the personal destinies of individuals, the artistic act always makes a choice. It is above all in this specific form focused on the dimension of “singularity” that “the work of art” conveys a certain image of reality and the contradictions and struggles that run through it. In the case of bourgeois art, this takes place in a mystified form and therefore either with a directly distorted representation of the class struggle or, in a more sophisticated form, with a representation of reality that is apparently devoid of connections with political and social contradictions.

Generally, the various artistic works expressing the different conceptions of bourgeois art tend to distort or deny the class



characteristics of the characters and situations in which they operate. Characters are often constructed artificially, placing issues, aspects, impulses, and emotions in the foreground, which are proposed as ideological material for the construction of the “fictitious identity” of sectors of the popular masses or to satisfy the “psychic” and aesthetic needs of the privileged social strata and classes.

According to dialectical materialism, there can be no artistic production aimed at satisfying the intellectual needs of the masses without making the artistic activity itself an articulation of social practice.

This approach contrasts with the common idea that artistic production originates not from particular intellectual interests and issues related to the field of ideology but, conversely, from experiences, problems, and subjective experiences that are more or less conscious, often conceived as untranslatable and therefore incommunicable on a linguistic level.

This idea leads to the denial of rational evidence, the possibility and necessity of an objective critical analysis of artistic products, which would obviously raise the need for their ideological framing and therefore their placement in relation to a specific field and class alignment.

In this sense, one of the most common reactionary attempts to operate in the field of artistic production should also be read as representing characters who are more or less despicable on a political, social, and ethical level from the reactionary privileged classes, as bearers of conflicts, needs, emotions, and common



feelings. When we try to highlight and give substance to the representation of such random aspects of characters, regardless of their social status and the role they actually play, we are moving in the direction of their ‘humanization’ and, consequently, also towards the creation of an idealized and fetishistic image of the social and political relationships to which they refer.

8.8.9. Realism vs. naturalism

On an artistic level, dialectical materialism finds its full expression in realism, which, in the construction of the character and his or her context, emphasizes everything that, starting from the relationship with class contradiction, objectively turns out to be ‘typical’. Hence the problem of representing ‘typical characters’ who, even in the articulations apparently inherent in their ‘specific subjectivity’, are in fact representative of a class or social stratum. Realistic representation aims to transcend not only the accidental singularity of the characters, but also all those aspects relating to the nature of their interactions and their relationship with the context in which they operate that are superfluous, superabundant, and therefore a source of obscurity and mystification of real relationships and contradictions. It is the social dimension in the broad sense that, as an objective dimension, becomes important for realism.

This means that it is not at all possible to refrain from indicating and defining the ideological criteria that establish what is fundamental in the artistic production of characters.

Realism is presented in bourgeois culture as a form of naturalism. Realism is therefore attributed with the tendency to describe



everything as it appears phenomenally and to reproduce ‘reality’ as faithfully as possible, with the utmost objective detachment and the utmost attention to detail.

Contrary to what it seems, however, naturalism is not realism but, vice versa, an “artistic” tendency of the bourgeoisie itself, although often combined in various ways with other tendencies of reactionary art. First of all, when naturalism shows the influence of the environment on human life, it relies on bourgeois sociology and thus revives the old positivism. From the point of view of dialectical materialism, naturalism therefore reproduces reality in a flattened and apologetic way, confusing profoundly different aspects and issues with the idea and appeal of the need for a faithful representation of immediate phenomena. This inevitably translates into the idea of a reality that, however crude and “inhuman” it may be, is also tragic and therefore impossible to transform politically and materially. The main characteristic of naturalism is therefore the distortion of a reality that is always contradictory and in flux, in relation to which artistic representation must instead highlight the inevitability of the affirmation of the most historically progressive, advanced, and revolutionary trends.

Naturalism is not realism even when it faithfully adheres to alleged chronicles or so-called ‘real events’. This is because it represents immediate phenomena that take precedence over the consideration of essential class relations and which are thus concealed as they are considered to be absorbed and resolved in the event itself. Behind the appearance of ‘photographic’ objectivity, naturalism ends up producing a fetishistic distortion of real-



ity, accentuated by another typical feature of the naturalistic form, the extensive use of psychology as a central element in the representation of characters, with a focus on their dark sides, their mounting suffering, and the uncertainty of their lives expressed in a tragic way and without any possibility of development or redemption. A veritable apology for the social order crystallized in natural and unchangeable laws, in the face of which ‘weak natures’ are destined to fail. We can thus see how, in the distortion of reality based on phenomenal appearances, alongside fetishism there is also a certain degree of skepticism, and naturalism can thus be combined not only with bourgeois sociologism but also with the emphasis and torments typical of a romantic representation of characters.

On the contrary, realism represents reality in terms of a reproduction defined by levels characterized by a hierarchical relationship. This starts from a structural class condition, with a related ideological superstructure, capable of highlighting the essential characteristics and relationships of the characters, their context, and the processes and events representative of certain social groups and certain eras.

8.8.10. The role of realism in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the CPC wrote:

“We must strive to create heroic images of workers, peasants, and soldiers. We must create types and not stick to real characters and events. ... Mao: ‘Life, when reflected in literary and ar-



tistic works, can and must be more sublime, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, closer to the ideal and, therefore, must possess a character of greater universality than everyday reality'. ... our writers must concentrate and synthesize the materials offered by life and accumulated over a long period to create different types of typical characters." [Let us raise the great red banner of Mao Tse-Tung's thought; let us actively participate in the great socialist cultural revolution - editorial in the People's Liberation Army Daily (April 18, 1966)].

If typical figures are to be represented in terms of class relations, they must emerge as a reproduction of the two poles of contradiction, and their typicality must reflect, first and foremost, the development and advancement of the highest levels of class struggle, which can be represented by bringing to the fore figures of militants and proletarians who distinguish themselves in this struggle. Since militant art is a form of the practice and ideological struggle of communists, the element of struggle and contradiction must be immediately apparent and operative in the work of art, since it is the work of art itself that moves as one of the two poles of the contradiction, struggle, alignment, and organization of the masses and, at the same time, is a guide that indicates the direction for addressing and resolving the contradiction.

8.8.11. The question of the audience's identification with the work of art

In 1937, in his essay "Self-Criticism," Brecht spoke of the Nazi conception of art as characterized by an immediate impulse to-



ward expression and action. According to this view, the artist would be moved by the inspiration of ‘being original’ and would be required to follow it faithfully to its extreme ‘political’ consequences, without feeling compelled to make it translatable, in conceptual and ideological terms, to his audience.

The artist would not require the audience to understand him but would look to the audience to identify with his work. We can say that this vision of the artist, in which the question of identification with the work of art is conceived as the result of the pursuit of a pragmatic process, as opposed to the possibility of a translation and justification of the content of the work, is characteristic of imperialist society, which manipulates and distorts the concept of what art is and should represent, opposing the need for a rational approach to the question of artistic production with the manifestation and pragmatic and political effect of the artistic act. At the root of this conception of art, which is more widespread today than ever, we therefore find Heideggerian sophistry. The ranks of celebrity “artists” who crowd the screens, mega-concerts, social networks, and, most recently, influencers who have burst onto the scene, put this approach into practice and are among the many examples of the level of cultural and social decadence into which bourgeois art has now fallen.

The “artistic product” promoted by the decadent bourgeoisie aims to determine an identification on the part of the public that either corresponds to the social identity of the members of the privileged classes and therefore ideologically supports their interests and practices, or is functional to the manipulation and at-



tempt to determine the ideological subjugation of the proletariat and the popular masses.

Conversely, proletarian art aims to highlight social and class antagonisms and to point to a revolutionary perspective as the solution to all the fundamental problems of the popular masses.

The work of art aims to engage and mobilize an audience with regard to the issues raised. Sometimes it presupposes the involvement of the audience as directly present (as during a theatrical performance or the screening of a film in a cinema). This need for involvement obviously remains even when the artistic product is reserved, in the immediate term, for individual enjoyment (e.g., the novel).

As an ideological product, the work of art aims to promote the audience's identification with the atmosphere, context, and issues raised by the work. At the moment when the work of art is more specifically characterized by the representation of typical characters, the product itself works to bring the audience to identify with those characters.

Many left-wing or far-left intellectuals and artists also appeal to the need to promote the audience's identification with the artistic work with the declared intention of bringing out the problems present in society in order to raise awareness, force people to become aware of them, and thus push them to propose solutions. However, this often boils down to merely exposing ugliness and immediately representing the brutality present in imperialist society, deliberately dwelling on the details, as if this in itself could contribute to advancing the struggle and evolving conscious-



ness. However, this view has nothing to do with artistic realism. On a political level, it is espoused, for example, by ‘left-wing’ Catholicism and pacifism. These tendencies, although formally starting from a political position opposed to the Nietzsche-Heidegger line, nevertheless lead to a conciliatory view of class contradictions.

It can therefore be said that, in the final analysis, albeit through more or less significant mediations, the work of art promotes identification with this or that decadent institution and social class or with the proletariat and the popular masses, their condition, and their revolutionary historical function.

8.8.12. Identification and alienation effect: an apparent contradiction

The question of the inevitability, in a class-divided society, of the ideological character of the work of art and its active function of aligning the public in a revolutionary or reactionary and conciliatory sense, translates into the fact that the artistic product in any case favors, in one way or another, the identification of the public with the atmosphere, context, characters, etc. represented.

It would therefore seem that promoting an “alienation effect” leads to downplaying or denying the issue of ideological alignment and the related possibility that the public may be directed to play a politically active role. In fact, the “alienation effect” is often promoted because of its connection with some conception of alienation, from which it follows that, since there are also bourgeois views of alienation, there are different reactionary ap-



proaches to the problem and to the techniques related to the alienation effect.

The latter, in the name of criticizing the principle of the audience's identification with the work of art, promote the reconciliation of class contradictions and attack the need for an epic and heroic representation of the proletariat, even invoking, as soon as the opportunity arises, the specter of the "cult of personality."

In terms of the development of the theoretical and practical elaboration of Realism in the artistic field, the promotion of the audience's identification with the proletariat and its historical function has instead been enriched by a particular approach to the problem of the alienation effect. This occurred in correspondence with the development of Marxism-Leninism and the affirmation of Maoism. The alienation effect was thus defined as a concept and a related realistic acting technique aimed, through moments of suspension and points of discontinuity in the rhythm of the work, at guiding the viewer belonging to the popular masses towards the identification and understanding of the different moments and levels of class contradictions, showing the inevitability of the emergence of the historically advanced pole.

The universal character of contradiction and the ideological and therefore class nature of all ideas and concepts were thus emphasized, affirming the need for the work of art to highlight the class struggle and the inevitability of its perspective and revolutionary outcomes. This was done using the most suitable forms to enhance the content of the work itself.



This is therefore very different from the cynical claim to be able to stand above the parties, as is the case with the postmodern approach to the question of the ‘alienation effect’, which aims to criticize any involvement in class contradiction, since any open choice of side is presented as totalitarian. This approach reflects a subjectivist and aristocratic position and, consequently, a precise choice, because this type of criticism is ultimately directed against the class that wants to transform reality in a revolutionary sense and against its ideology.

The attack on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism regarding the question of the so-called cult of personality is essentially based on this liberal-reactionary and post-modern ‘philosophical’ basis of the right and the ‘left’.

The revolutionary proletariat has always attached great importance to the role of the leaders, heroes, and martyrs of the revolution, as well as to all those members of the popular masses who, based on the acquisition of class consciousness, can be proposed as models endowed with universal characteristics. Thus, in the epic representations of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Gonzalo, and other leaders of Maoism and the International Communist Movement, the relative, subjective, and in a certain sense inessential aspects of these personalities are abstracted in order to bring to the fore, even from an artistic point of view, the immortal contributions of their thought and practice.

It is therefore up to communists to take up and give adequate importance to the problem of art as a particular active form of objective reflection of reality, which highlights its fundamental



contradictions and their inevitable revolutionary resolution. This implies a truly objective, i.e., materialist-dialectical conception of the problem of aesthetics. What is beautiful is what is aesthetically capable of corresponding to the ideological content represented by the proletariat in relation to a perspective of transforming reality. This correspondence therefore also requires a form capable of rendering in a profound, effective, and vivid way the feelings, interests, perspective, and aspirations of the proletariat as the vanguard representative of the other mass sectors.

8.9. The “specific ideological struggle

8.9.1. Importance and role of the “specific ideological struggle” [SIS]

The question of ideological struggle, understood as part of the question of ‘intellectual and moral reform’, has a specific dimension that all organizations referring to communist ideology are forced to deal with.

This dimension concerns certain ideological issues relating to the formation and transformation of individual subjectivity that can be traced back to the private and personal sphere of cadres, candidates, sympathizers, and militants of mass organizations. These issues point to the need for a “Specific Ideological Struggle” [SIS]. This paragraph 8.9. is inherent to these issues, which represent only one particular aspect of the general question of



the ideological struggle aimed at transforming the subjectivity of individual cadres, militants, and sympathizers of an organization that they consider communist.

Comrades, in addition to having a wealth of political and ideological positions and experiences that are subject to comparison and redefinition in close relation to the various levels of organized and disciplined collective practice for specific purposes, are also bearers of an even more subjective dimension which, although present and influential, tends to remain in the background and to be considered and managed separately as a specifically personal, intimate, and private part of their individual lives⁷³.

⁷³ The theory and practice of SIS is one of the universal contributions of Maoism, which must above all represent one of the levels of collective practice always present in the life of a communist organization. Not only in the public sphere of collective life and militancy, but also in the sphere of the “private and personal” there is a reflection of class contradiction. Class contradiction and those derived from it relating to the struggle between revolution and reaction, progress and regression, etc., permeate the entire public, personal, and private lives of cadres, militants, candidates, sympathizers, and other members of the organizations generated. If all these contradictions are not adequately addressed and worked through collectively, and therefore also through the SIS, bourgeois ideology tends to take root and advance, often nesting deep in the private and personal sphere. A communist has a single conception of the world that operates not only on the public level, but also on the private and personal level. It follows that the private and personal level must also be considered and transformed in order to ensure the greatest possible integration on the level of the subjectivity of comrades. SIS is therefore necessary in the first place to overcome, on the basis of the priority of politics and the centrality of the revolutionary choice, the division between public and private/personal, which tends to transform itself into a schizophrenic split between a part of subjectivity engaged on the political



8.9.2. Themes of the SIS: militancy and the contradiction between the public sphere and the private and personal sphere

The participation of individual militants or sympathizers in the collective life and practice of a communist organization often reveals the role and influence of their private and personal lives.

As regards the private lives of militants, we find first and foremost the conditioning factors and contradictions relating to their origins, status, and class affiliation. On this basis, a series of fundamental issues emerge, such as those relating to choices concerning school and university education, the search for a career, or one's working conditions. At the same time, on this basis, other issues also arise that sometimes seem to conflict with the needs of militancy and that refer to choices such as those related to intellectual passions and so-called hobbies, the management of one's own space and leisure time, body and health care, and possibly collective and socializing practices in the sporting, cultural, artistic, etc. spheres. (music, theater, literature, poetry, cinema, painting, etc.).

Even in the sphere of personal life, the dynamics and relationships typical of this area often seem to take away space, resources, and motivational drive from militancy and organized

side and another part that tends to present itself as autonomous and focused only on a purely individual dimension.



political practice. This area can be considered related to the intertwining of one's class origin and condition with the management of parental, family, emotional-sexual, and friendly relationships. In this sphere, in the absence of solid points of reference linked to the formation of effective political, cultural, educational, and social class organizations, a certain degree of disorder, confusion, and futile expenditure of psycho-physical energy sometimes reigns among the masses.

Bourgeois society tends to propose a fetishistic view of interpersonal relationships, in which class contradictions seem to disappear. It is a vision that instead places in the foreground, in a distorted, abstract, and idealized form, and consequently emphatic or depressive, the aspect of affections, emotions, feelings, and eroticism, aesthetic criteria relating to the identification and preference for the "beautiful," and ethical criteria concerning the "good" and the "right." This fetishism, which is generated in different areas of social life where it is artfully nurtured, tends to penetrate the private and personal sphere and translate into automatisms that determine the related appearance of an objective and neutral reality. These automatisms can in fact be demystified and transformed through the conscious application of the materialistic dialectical theory of contradiction.

8.9.3. Ideology and criticism of psychological conceptions

Individual subjectivity, which emerges as closely connected to social conditions and practices, ideological stratifications, and interpersonal relationships, is commonly the subject of pseudo-scientific interpretations that can be defined as "psychological."



The concepts underlying these interpretations refer to a “psychic dimension” that is conceived as purely individual⁷⁴ and therefore structurally unrelated to class relations and class struggle itself, at best the object of “care” and “therapeutic treatment” (Eastern philosophies, relaxation techniques, psychotherapies, etc.).

These concepts are fueled by references to examples of individual cases characterized by a subjective history that presents manifestations of particular imbalance and suffering. These cases are determined on average by the difficulty, for individuals who are objectively dependent and therefore inherently fragile, of being able to individually transcend situations that seem to present themselves as having no way out, as they are generally the product of dominant social relations that grind down the lives of the members of the popular masses and often also those of the privileged petty bourgeoisie, as well as, in some cases, the bourgeoisie itself. These are situations that can occasionally affect children, adolescents, girls, women without independent economic resources, precarious or unemployed workers, the elderly, etc.

Psychological concepts fix these situations of particular difficulty and sometimes tragedy, abstracting them from their concrete social genesis and modeling them on the formation of a vision of the psyche (and therefore of instincts, affections, feelings, etc.) that would be relevant to all ‘individuals’.

⁷⁴ For example, the so-called character of a person considered, moreover, as an invariant element.



From the point of view of historical and dialectical materialism, as far as most of the population is concerned, what is commonly considered to be a separate part of the subjectivity of individuals, inherent in personality, psyche, and individual ‘character’, is instead an expression of ideology and its influence. The private and personal sphere of material existence and the related thinking of individual comrades, cadres, militants of mass organizations, candidates, and close sympathizers of an organization that claims to refer to communist ideology is therefore ultimately attributable to the question of the relationship with ideology. The relationship with the conditions of material existence and the practical relations of individual life is related to continuous choices that are imbued with ideology and which, as such, do not and cannot pertain to a given and unchangeable structure. In this sense, while class origin is a given, class affiliation is certainly not a given, as it is not a mechanical consequence of class origin, but rather the expression of a succession of choices made over time, connoted in an ideological sense, however conscious or unconscious this connotation may be.

8.9.4. The constitution of individual subjectivity as ‘historical formation’

The question of the formation of individual subjectivity, as far as its private and personal dimension is concerned, must also be considered from the point of view of its actual ‘historical formation’.



Militants are therefore more or less conscious bearers of a personal ‘history’ that begins within a specific class of origin and subsequently develops and structures itself over time in relation to the complex experiences and relationships that characterize the evolution and formation of the child, his or her transition to adolescence and youth, etc. This ‘history’ also includes the influence of the class conditions of the family of origin and related family relationships. This influence is inherent not only in family relationships but also in relationships with other figures in the parental circle, to the extent that it conditions friendships, the path from kindergarten to school and possibly to university, the social circles frequented, including those related to recreational activities and socialization, etc. This process of ‘historical formation’ then continues when, in relation to the question of work and its contradictions, a class condition emerges which, although related to that of origin, may not correspond exactly to it. This class condition is in turn intertwined with further choices in the relational and emotional sphere, including those relating to the formation and management of one’s own family.

A reconstruction, on a materialistic-historical and dialectical basis, of this “historical formation” is an integral and necessary part of the process of transforming the subjective in a proletarian and revolutionary sense.

8.9.5. The denial of the need for “specific ideological struggle” in opportunist groups



One of the problems that opportunist groups deny or address in superficial and pragmatic terms, with the aim of reconciling contradictions, is the need for the “Intellectual and Moral Reform” of political cadres, militants of mass organizations, and sympathizers to also address the specific issue of ideological struggle [SIS].

The issue that is not really addressed and elaborated in these cases is the need for a communist organization to consider, in addition to the public sphere of militancy, the question of the reactionary sedimentation and crystallization of bourgeois ideology in the “private” and “personal” sphere of comrades. In a certain sense, all opportunist organizations, however much they reject it on a theoretical and ideological level, are forced to deal with the question of SIS in practice, but only when the commitments and responsibilities of militancy clearly lead to situations of crisis and disengagement, or when the behavior of individual militants in the public sphere eventually damages the image of the organization.

These opportunistic organizations conceive SIS as an ancillary activity that, from time to time, can be conducted with conciliatory logic that feeds liberalism and anarchism, or, conversely, that must be addressed with bureaucratic impositions and disciplinary practices. All of this is mostly accompanied by superficial and disorganized conceptions and occasional and crude strategies. This ranges from dispensing trivial notions of behavioral and cognitive psychology to empty and emphatic exhortations and moral sermons, to the creation of scapegoats and the introduction of massive doses of competitiveness and rivalry



fueled by the easy attribution of recognition, formal roles, and gold stars related to “positions of responsibility.”

Opportunistic groups thus come to theorize that the main method for managing the relationship between the public sphere of militancy and that of the “private and personal life” of comrades must be that of separation. It is therefore argued that the “private and personal sphere” of the life and relationships of each comrade must not a priori interfere with the public sphere of militancy and the related roles, tasks, and responsibilities. This approach ultimately denies the principle of the universal presence of contradiction, favors the maintenance, accumulation, and affirmation of bourgeois ideology⁷⁵, and therefore has the consequence that the SIS is addressed when it is generally too late, that is, when the crisis of militancy is often already irreversible. The theoretical denial of SIS on the basis of the abstract and bu-

⁷⁵ All organizations that refer to communist ideology and deny, on an ideological and practical level, the need for Intellectual and Moral Reform and, in close connection with it, the SIS, are opportunistic and regressive because, in addition to leaving ample room for the accumulation of bourgeois ideology in the private and public spheres, they oppose the conscious elaboration of the contradictions that arise between comrades or between individual comrades and the organization. Contradictions which, although sometimes presenting more or less significant aspects of criticism and personal controversy (perhaps characterized by a strong subjective, emotional, etc. imprint), are often also an expression of evolutionary elements and therefore representative of the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. These elements therefore sometimes strike at the heart of certain aspects of opportunistic political organizations themselves, highlighting and revealing, albeit in a convoluted form, their bourgeois ideological and relational content.



reaucratic assertion of the supposed principle that “*the ‘private and personal sphere’ of the life and relationships of each comrade should not interfere with militancy*” not only leads to the denial of the need to fight against the role and influence of bourgeois ideology in determining regressive behavior in terms of militancy, but also has further opportunistic consequences.

When the contradiction between militancy and the “personal” and “private” emerges and erupts within organizations, there is often another side to it. The most striking example is the history of the Lotta Continua group in the 1970s (but a similar situation also affected relatively large areas of the Autonomia Operaia movement). This workerist (operaiste) organization, in addition to being movementist and economist, was, perhaps not coincidentally, managed with the classic opportunistic system of combining movementist assemblyism, based on minimalism with regard to political definition and theoretical foundation, accompanied by bureaucracy devoid of any element of democratic centralism on the part of its political leadership. On this basis, Lotta Continua saw the prevalence within the movement of the class influence of elements from the privileged bourgeoisie, who had not at all initiated and carried out any process of “intellectual and moral reform” and who, as far as the male side of the organization was concerned, were characterized by the predominance of homophobic, patriarchal, and male-dominated logic. This situation exploded when the women comrades blew the lid off everything that was covering and reproducing it. This rebellion by the women comrades, which was accompanied by similar processes in the areas of “Autonomia Operaia”, was by no means



only regressive in nature but, on the contrary, also had a significant progressive character. From this latter point of view, the rebellion of women, which started from the contradiction between militancy and the personal and private sphere, and which unmasked and sank Lotta Continua, was fully justified. The content of this rebellion, however underdeveloped its form, was right, and this was the main thing. In that situation of rebellion, at least for a short period of time, the possibility had indeed opened up for the progressive content to be accompanied by an adequate form and thus become a conscious and organized contribution to the construction of an organization that was effectively revolutionary or, at least, more advanced than the previous one. The fact that this did not happen and that the whole thing took on the character of petty-bourgeois feminism, with the consequent liquidation of any organized perspective⁷⁶, does not detract from the significance of the battle undertaken by the women of that time within Lotta Continua.

This battle shows us that class contradictions are also reflected in the ‘private’ and ‘personal’ spheres and therefore also return as an open contradiction between militancy and collective orga-

⁷⁶ The opportunistic character of Lotta Continua has therefore contributed not only to giving the man-woman contradiction an antagonistic character and thus to rejecting essentially anti-bourgeois constructive impulses and demands, but also to causing these same impulses and demands to degenerate over time. Not taken up, valued, and redefined on a collective level in relation to an effectively communist ideology, have fallen prey to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois feminism.



nized form on the one hand and the ‘private’ and ‘personal’ sphere on the other.

The progressive line is sometimes an expression and reflection of the class struggle and the concrete living conditions of the popular masses who instinctively perceive distance and alienation from the bourgeois and opportunist political classes⁷⁷. Under certain conditions and circumstances, this line can also emerge from the “private” and “personal” sphere of militants and comrades in general, and thus take the form of manifestations of discontent, individual rebellion, and disengagement,

⁷⁷ Comrades also differ from one another in terms of class origin and class affiliation. These differences translate into the fact that in the private and personal sphere there is sometimes also a class instinct, an embryo of proletarian consciousness linked, for example, to identification, in terms of class affiliation, with one’s own class origin or actual class condition. This difference between comrades is often only a matter of contradictions within the people, such as the contradiction between men and women within the proletariat and the popular masses. However, contradictions within the people have not only an evolutionary side, where such contradictions become an aspect of the development of collective life and practice, but also a regressive side, where antagonistic contradiction, or at least some aspects of it, lurk. Thus, for example, if the man-woman contradiction within the popular masses is structurally within the people, the contradiction with patriarchy and machismo, which may be present within the popular masses and therefore reflected in male comrades, if not adequately addressed and resolved through ideological struggle, becomes an antagonistic contradiction. Similarly, if some comrades who enjoy a privileged class status have a lifestyle, habits, practices, and customs in their private and personal lives that reflect those of the privileged classes, the personal contradictions that may arise between comrades on this basis often have antagonistic aspects.



sometimes even silent and simply acted out against the organization to which they belong.

From this point of view, the SIS is a necessary tool for cultural revolution⁷⁸ because it works in this case to reconnect those elements and aspects of progressive content that can emerge from the private and personal sphere of comrades (and especially women, as the history of the class struggle in our country shows), with a conscious, evolutionary, and revolutionary content. From this point of view too, the SIS presents itself as a vital necessity in that it materializes the possibility that class contradiction, through various and different mediations, can translate into an effective contribution to organizational construction.

The “private and personal sphere” of each comrade’s life and relationships, which “*should not interfere with, confuse, limit, or damage the public sphere of militancy,*” in the case of the proletariat and the popular masses may contain, in addition to regressive elements to be brought to light, elaborated and corrected with the SIS (if objectively possible), also any evolutionary elements that derive from contradictions within the people

⁷⁸ The SIS therefore operates on two fronts: 1) against bourgeois ideology, which often lurks deep within the private and personal sphere; 2) against bourgeois ideology, which tends to become entrenched, as a result of routine logic, within the collective organization itself and its conceptions. The SIS therefore operates as one of the plans of the Intellectual and Moral Reform both towards individual subjectivities as such and as a driving force for the renewal and growth of the organization as a whole and therefore as a permanent cultural revolution with the aim of establishing the proletariat as the hegemonic class on a practical and ideological level.



and that require adequate discussion on the basis of the proletariat's conception of the world.

8.9.6. The SIS and the need for a new people's democratic civil society

Gramsci considers "bourgeois civil society" to be a set of institutions and associations that work to support the domination of the bourgeoisie in terms of hegemony, understood as an organized set of social relations and practices centered on the functioning of ideology. In this sense, for Gramsci, this type of "civil society" is a subordinate dimension of the state that relies on the repressive bureaucratic machine. This dimension is represented: 1) firstly, by the functions of a political class delegated by the upper bourgeoisie to perform government roles, by the ruling parties, by reactionary trade unions, by the Catholic Church, by schools and universities, by the mass media, by social welfare and social health services, etc.); 2) secondly, by a set of bonds and relationships that characterize certain relational spheres, e.g., the family, circles of relatives and friends, emotional-sexual relationships, acquaintances and friendships deriving from common sporting, recreational, and socializing practices.

In this second case, belonging to the bourgeois 'civil society' of these spheres is not always a given, but only when these spheres are characterized by bourgeois ideology, which therefore conveys meaning, expectations, life and work plans, and goals. It is not a given, however, when these spheres are actively part of a proletarian and popular class alignment and are therefore



marked by a political and ideological choice of opposition, mobilization, and struggle.

If militants must refer to a unified conception of the world represented by proletarian ideology and if, therefore, the division between 'public' and 'private', 'personal' and 'political', it follows that these militants cannot even relate to relational spheres characterized by the dominance of bourgeois ideology and its practices and expectations without being obliged to introduce class contradiction immediately, consciously, and in the most appropriate ways.

In such spheres, in the case of the explicit expression of class contradiction on the ideological and political level, the process itself must end either with the transformation of relations, according to the needs of the proletariat as the hegemonic class, or with their rupture.

Areas such as family (both of origin and of belonging), parental, friendship, emotional-sexual, recreational and socializing, cultural and artistic, etc. must therefore present themselves as a place characterized, if necessary, by the explicit expression of class differences and contradictions and, if necessary, by the initiation of a process of rupture and separation. Separation, which, for example, must in any case take place in the case of a family of origin, when it would make no evolutionary sense to want to introduce contradiction internally.

Similarly, a break must occur regarding any emotional-sexual or friendly relationship characterized by class antagonism in terms



of ideology, customs and behavior, life plans and directly professed political positions, etc.

Only in this way can we truly contribute to achieving, within the party and its organizations, an effective integration of the public and private spheres, of the personal and political lives of militants, within the framework of a single proletarian conception of the world. This means simultaneously building, also in relation to certain specific aspects of the question of hegemony, elements of a new civil society, that of people's democracy and socialism.

It is therefore essential to recall the best traditions of the Communist Movement of the Third International, of the parties and the international Maoist movement, and of the work of Gramsci and the Communist Party of Italy that he promoted and directed⁷⁹, according to which organized collective subjectivity is called upon to play a normative, ethical, and educational role with regard to customs, behaviors, choices, and life plans of militants, in order to support and enhance everything that, even with regard to areas such as family (of origin or related to bonds and projects inherent in building a new family), parental, friendly,

⁷⁹ Consider the great tradition of Communist Marriages as indicative, on a symbolic and ideological level, of a choice by spouses aimed at solidarity and mutual support with regard to the care and education of children, the division of labor within the family, etc., and with regard to the tasks, responsibilities, and burdens of militancy. A tradition which today, in a certain sense, must be reaffirmed and upheld in relation to all demanding and in some way lasting choices concerning the formation of privileged affective and sexual relationships, regardless of sexual preferences and choices, with respect to which — inasmuch as they express the level of civilization and the very practice of the masses — no differentiation or discrimination can be tolerated.



emotional-sexual, recreational, cultural, etc., moves towards the construction of a New Civil Society, inhibiting and counteracting everything that contradicts this path.

8.9.7. Forms and methods of the SIS

Militants and sympathizers do not live outside bourgeois society; they are therefore subject to all its influences and, with them, to the bourgeoisie's attempts to pollute and disrupt the communist organization. Any critical passage in the life of a comrade, and therefore any significant event in the life and practice of the communist organization and the class struggle that affects individual comrades, reopens contradictions and reintroduces and exacerbates divisions and unresolved issues. The bourgeoisie can try to insinuate itself into all this in order to transform the DNA of the comrades. The more the role of the SIS is underestimated or denied, the less one can really know one's comrades and the more likely it is that sympathizers and candidates will appear who pursue goals very different from those linked to the interests of the proletariat or, similarly, the more likely it is that cadres and militants will give in and venture onto the ambiguous and disastrous terrain of collaboration with the reaction, in order to secure personal advantages or to escape economic burdens, threats, and blackmail.

The levels of the SIS are related to:

- 1) **Those responsible for the SIS.** Specific figures are needed, chosen from among those who occupy overall positions of responsibility, who are also specifically assigned to the management of the SIS and who are ac-



countable for their actions first to the leadership and second to the collective reference group.

- 2) **The role of the collective sphere.** There are issues of collective political relevance that arise during the relationship with those responsible for the SIS and which, for various reasons, cannot be resolved during the course of the SIS. In such cases, the SIS must continue and develop within the collective sphere of the comrades concerned, with the timely involvement of the comrades concerned.
- 3) **Training meetings.** There are aspects and themes of the SIS that must be addressed through regular meetings and training courses.
- 4) **Political activity assessments.** Specific SIS meetings must be conducted directly within the organized collective of reference, if they clearly emerge from militant and organized work in the public sphere as politically necessary, particularly in relation to issues concerning the assessment of political and practical activity.
- 5) **Thematic groups.** SIS may also be the subject of specific 'Intellectual and Moral Reform' group meetings, led by a designated leader, which must involve the participation of militants, members of mass organizations, and sympathizers on a thematic basis, in order to address and resolve, if possible, ideological issues that, in this case, affect several members (think, for example, of addiction to so-called soft drugs or habitual alcohol con-



sumption, lack of interest and motivation to engage in appropriate physical activity, consumerist behavior with related investment in futile activities, a tendency toward antisocial and self-destructive behavior, manifestations of patriarchy and machismo, etc.).



V. MISSION: FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



9. THE ABC OF THE LENINIST PARTY

In order to address the issue of today's tasks relating to the formation of a communist party, it is necessary to first review the ideological foundations of the Leninist conception of the party.

9.1. Lenin's work

From 1897 to 1903, in a large series of articles, resolutions, and essays, Lenin laid the foundations for the Leninist conception of the party⁸⁰.

⁸⁰ The foundations of the theory of the Communist Party were set out particularly in a series of articles and texts by Lenin dating from the late 19th century to 1902:

- *The Tasks of the Russian Social Democrats, 1897 (first published in Geneva in 1898)*
- *A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats, 1899*
- *Apropos of the 'Profession de Foi', 1899*
- *Articles for Rabochaya Gazeta, 1899: "Our Programme, Our Immediate Task, An Urgent Question"*
- *A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy," 1899*
- *Where to Begin?, 1901*
- *A Talk with Defenders of Economism, 1901*
- *The "Unity" Conference of R.S.D.L.P. Organisations Abroad,*
- *Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View', 1902*
- *What Is To Be Done?, 1902*
- *Report of the Iskra Editorial Board to the Meeting (Conference) of R.S.D.L.P. Committees, 1902*
- *A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks, 1902*
- *On the Tasks of the Social-Democratic Movement, 1902*
- *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, 1903*



These are the ABCs of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party theory. Opportunist groups in Italy, most of which claim to uphold Lenin, deny, distort, and attack even these basic principles. It is therefore necessary to begin with an exposition of these principles.

This chapter will address the following issues:

- 1) the importance attributed by Lenin to revolutionary theory and its specification,
- 2) the necessity of theoretical struggle in order to break up opportunist and revisionist tendencies,
- 3) the genesis of proletarian theory,
- 4) the proletarian subjects to which primary reference should be made,
- 5) the nature of class consciousness,
- 6) the distinction between economic struggle and political struggle,
- 7) the priority character of political struggle,
- 8) the relationship between theoretical work, propaganda, and agitation,
- 9) the “political newspaper” and the “propaganda magazine,”
- 10) the party as an organization of revolutionary cadres.

*(All the texts and articles mentioned are available online:
<https://www.marxists.org/italiano/lenin/lenin-opere/index.htm>)*



9.2. Lenin on the importance of theoretical work

Lenin asserts that without a revolutionary theory it is not possible to have a revolutionary party and that the theoretical issue is absolutely central to the formation and construction of the communist party: *“In our opinion, the lack of theory denies a revolutionary trend of the right to existence and inevitably condemns it, sooner or later, to political bankruptcy. According to the Socialist-Revolutionaries, however, the lack of theory is a most excellent thing, particularly favourable for unity”* (Revolutionary Adventurism, Lenin, August 1902, V.6) ... *“For the moment, we will limit ourselves to pointing out that only a party guided by a vanguard theory can fulfill the function of a vanguard fighter.”* (What Is To Be Done? 1902; emphasis added)

For Lenin, the issue of revolutionary theory arises in terms of the need to apply the universal truth of Marxism to the particular and specific conditions of a given country. We therefore find that Lenin attributes, as a central task for the formation of the party, the utmost importance to the work of theoretically specifying Marxism in relation to the concrete economic, political, and ideological situation of Russia at the end of the 19th century. Let us consider what Lenin says in this regard: *“We do not regard Marx’s theory as something definitive and intangible; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the cornerstones of the science that socialists must advance in all directions if they do not want to be left behind by life. We think that an independent elaboration of Marx’s theory is especially essential for Marxist socialists, since this theory gives us only general guid-*



ing principles, which, in particular, are applied in England differently than in France, in France differently than in Germany, and in Germany differently than in Russia. (Articles for *Rabochaya Gazeta*, 1899: *Our Program*; emphasis added).

Here Lenin emphasizes the need for the “independent elaboration of Marxism,” stating further in this regard: “For Russian Social Democracy in particular, theory acquires even greater importance for the following three reasons, which are often forgotten. First, our party is still in the process of formation, is still defining its character, and is far from having settled its accounts with other currents of revolutionary thought, which threaten to divert the movement from the right path... Secondly, the social democratic movement is international in its very essence. This means...that...we must be able to critically evaluate and verify this experience for ourselves...Thirdly, the national tasks of Russian social democracy are such as no other socialist party in the world has ever faced.”

Lenin emphasizes that the specification of Marxism is particularly necessary: 1) to defeat all opportunist and revisionist tendencies, 2) to rework and assimilate the experience of the international communist movement, 3) because the tasks of Marxists regarding the proletarian revolution and the construction of socialism vary from time to time across different countries.

In the collective work edited under Stalin’s supervision, entitled *History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) and of the USSR*, it is therefore emphasized how Russian Marxists, particularly Lenin, had to tackle the task of specifying Marxism by placing



the theoretical and ideological struggle against opportunism at the center of the first stage of the party's formation: *"The greatest ideological obstacle to the spread of social democratic Marxism at that time were the populist ideas then prevailing among the vanguard workers and intellectuals with revolutionary aspirations... Marxism in Russia could only develop and strengthen itself by fighting against the populists" [emphasis added].*

"By fighting against the populists and exposing them, Plekhanov wrote a series of Marxist works... [which]... paved the way for the victory of Marxism in Russia... Plekhanov's writings and struggle seriously undermined the influence of the populists among revolutionary intellectuals. But the ideological defeat of populism was far from complete. This task—delivering the coup de grâce to populism as an enemy of Marxism—was reserved for Lenin" [emphasis added].

"It was necessary to demolish populism from its foundations in the ideological arena in order to ensure the continued spread of Marxism and the possibility of founding a social democratic party. This task was accomplished by Lenin" [emphasis added].

"Lenin believed that Russian Marxists should first organize a single socialist workers' party with isolated Marxist circles."

"Already in the decade 1890-1900, the struggle of Lenin and his comrades against populism had ended with the definitive defeat of populism in the ideological arena."

Nothing was therefore more foreign to Lenin than the idea of dogmatically repeating Marx's theories, which in no way aims



at the theoretical destruction of the revisionist and opportunist tendencies that were actually present and which easily tends to become a form and source of reactionary distortion of Marxism (as is still the case today with Bordigism and Trotskyism, for example).

For Lenin, it was essential to bring the revolutionary essence of Marxism to life in the Russian reality in order to create the ideological basis for the formation of the party. We find precisely the same approach in Gramsci's immense work *Prison Notebooks*, but also in José Carlos Mariátegui⁸¹, who can rightly be considered the Gramsci of Latin America. We find it particularly Mao Zedong who, in the initial battle for the specification of Marxism-Leninism and the construction of the party, laid the foundations for the birth of Maoism, the third stage in the development of the revolutionary theory of the proletariat. We also find it, after Mao, in the main leaders and founders of the Maoist parties engaged in the New Democracy revolutions and mainly in the work carried out by Chairman Gonzalo to establish the Communist Party of Peru.

⁸¹ See, for example, the specific application of Marxism-Leninism to Peru in *Seven Essays on Peruvian Reality* (Einaudi, Ed. 1972). The index is as follows: 1. Outline of the economic evolution, 2. The problem of the Indian, 3. The problem of the land, 4. Public education, 5. The religious factor, 6. Regionalism and centralism, 7. Literature on trial.



9.3. Lenin's theoretical struggle for the disintegration of opportunist and revisionist tendencies

Lenin's enormous work in specifying Marxism in relation to all the main economic and political issues of Russian reality was inextricably linked to his theoretical and ideological battle to undermine the influence of anti-Marxist tendencies.

Lenin considered it crucial to counter any attempt by these tendencies to develop their influence within the advanced sectors of the proletariat, the popular masses, and the petty intelligentsia. The theoretical and ideological struggle against populism and its subsequent ramifications directly engaged Lenin for several years. Following the defeat of populism, a new anti-Marxist tendency, that of "economist Marxism," had appeared, seeking to establish itself among the proletariat and the opposition movements.

Lenin summarized the relationship between the need to fight against "economist Marxism" and the goal of unity among Russian Marxists in the following terms: *"We demand a change in the tactics that have prevailed in recent years; we declare that before uniting, and in order that we may unite, we must first of all define ourselves resolutely and clearly"* (Lenin - *What Is To Be Done?* - 1902; *emphasis added*).

In this regard, Lenin stated: *"Only a direct and open polemic against narrow 'economis' and Bernsteinian ideas... can ensure the correct development of the Russian working-class movement*



and Russian Social-Democracy.” (Apropos of the ‘profession de foi’, 1899).

Without thoroughly fighting against movementist and economic Marxism, Lenin and the Russian Marxists would never have been able to truly pave the way for the construction of the proletarian party.

9.4. The struggle against opportunism as a central task for the formation of the party

We can already draw politically relevant conclusions from these initial remarks by Lenin. We can see today how futile it is to claim that a truly communist party can be built without waging a thorough struggle against all the revisionist, reformist, and opportunist forces and tendencies that currently dominate the opposition movements, the far left, trade union struggles, and alternative trade unionism⁸².

⁸² Without breaking through the ideological, political, and organizational barrier reproduced by the current hegemony of these anti-proletarian tendencies with an initial phase of theoretical-political “war of position” (Gramsci), it is impossible to tackle the tasks of the first phase of party formation. A summary list of the opportunist tendencies against which it is necessary to develop theoretical work in order to adequately address the question of the formation of the communist party concerns first and foremost: workerism and neo-workerism; Trotskyism (PCR, PCL) and Bordigism (Sicobas leadership group, TIR, Iskra); left-wing populism (Rete dei Comunisti, PAP); red fascism (Resistenza popolare, Prospettiva Unitaria); reformist and antagonistic movementism; the conceptions and lines of the various “alternative unions”; revisionist and anti-Maoist Marxism-Leninism (FGC,



This concerns the need to fight against the fundamental ideological deviations that characterize the various processes of “aggregation of communists” currently underway.

To argue, for example, as is fashionable today, that: *“In the absence of an organic link with the workers’ movement, discussions between individual groups that define themselves as communist remain at an abstract level, with no practical application”* (Union of Struggle for the Communist Party⁸³) means abandoning the priority tasks of theoretical and ideological development. It means proposing a revisionist vision that is ultimately workerist⁸⁴. Let us consider what Raniero Panzieri, founder of theoret-

GC, Piattaforma Comunista); opportunist deviations that claim to uphold Mao (PMLI) and “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” (CARC-nPCI, Proletari Comunisti-PCm).

⁸³ The attempt at unification between Piattaforma Comunista and the Tuscan group originating from Lotta e Unità (formerly Linearossa) subsequently failed, and the latter group is now undertaking, with essentially unchanged positions, an attempt at a party process with the FGC.

⁸⁴ The concept of workerism refers primarily to the so-called “theoretical workerism” of the *Quaderni Rossi* (see the introductions to the aforementioned texts by Panzieri) and, secondarily, to the subsequent path that, passing through the magazine *Classe Operaia* and the organization Potere Operaio, led to Autonomia Operaia in the early 1970s. Neo-workerism is therefore considered to be essentially internal to this type of theoretical and political conception. Workerism was largely hegemonic in the groups and formations of the 1970s, both as a specific tendency that essentially also included Lotta Continua, and as an eclectic hybridization with social democratic revisionism (the PdUP-Manifesto group), Trotskyism (Avanguardia Operaia), Marxism-Leninism (PC(M-L)I-Voce Operaia) and with the guerrilla conceptions of the combatant formations (albeit with the due partial distinction between them, issues that we cannot explore in depth here given the subject of our work). To this day, various basic theses of



ical workerism in the late 1950s, said: “*The crisis of organizations—parties and unions—lies in the growing gap between them and the real movement of the class, and therefore in the gap between the objective conditions of the struggle and the ideology and politics of the parties. The problem can only be addressed by starting from the conditions, structures, and grassroots movements, where analysis is carried out only through participation in the struggles.*” (*The revival of Marxism-Leninism in Italy*, p. 15; emphasis added). In this quotation, Panzieri argues that ‘analysis’, i.e. historical elaboration and the respective comparison between different organizations and different subjectivities, only makes sense if it is closely, immediately, and materially connected with the practice of organizing movements, mass organizations, and the struggles themselves. In this way, the need for theoretical work and struggle for the formation of the party is denied.

These revisionist positions deny that, by definition, the Leninist party in its early stages does not originate in close connection with the promotion of economic struggles and mass movements but based on specific theoretical and political work aimed at building a hegemonic position within the revolutionary political movement.

workerism and neo-workerism are directly or indirectly dominant.



9.5. Where does revolutionary theory come from?

For Lenin, revolutionary theory doesn't arise from the working class or from mass opposition movements that appeal to the interests of oppressed and exploited workers. Therefore, not even the Communist Party arose from the struggles of the working class and the popular masses. Lenin discusses the formation of Marxist parties in European countries in the last decades of the 19th century, highlighting how these parties arose from premises and foundations that were different from those related to the development of the labor movement.

The parties of the proletariat were formed on the basis of Marxism starting from: a) the critique of classical political economy, b) materialism and classical German philosophy, c) the overcoming, on the ground of scientific socialism, of the early doctrines of socialism and communism. The labor movement, on the other hand, was formed on the basis of the development of the economic struggle and the struggle against capitalists and governments for trade union demands and reformist political demands.

Lenin states: *“Social-Democracy does not merely serve the labor movement: it is the ‘union of socialism with the working-class movement’ (to use K. Kautsky’s definition that reproduces the fundamental ideas of the Communist Manifesto); its task is to introduce definite socialist ideals into the spontaneous working-class movement, to connect it with socialist convictions, which must be at the level of modern science, to bind it to a systematic political struggle for democracy as a means of imple-*



menting socialism, to merge, in a word, this spontaneous movement into an indissoluble whole with the activity of a revolutionary party” (Our immediate task; emphasis added).

Lenin speaks very clearly about the “union” between the Marxist party and the “spontaneous workers’ movement” as the work of the revolutionary Marxist subjectivity to serve the transformation of that movement. According to Lenin, this action is therefore aimed not at the economic-trade union “radicalization”⁸⁵ of the “workers’ movement” that develops “spontaneously” or the multiplication of reformist political demands against governments, but is rather aimed at the deviation of the workers’ movement and, in general, that of the popular masses from its reformist course towards Marxism and the struggle for the affirmation of the revolutionary program. Instead, within the far left the workerist point of view is commonly shared, which denies the need for the establishing of a “communist workers’ movement.” Consider, for example, how Raniero Panzieri, the main representative of the first phase of workerism (so-called “theoretical workerism”), tries to distort Lenin in an economistic sense: *“I would say that the method of inquiry... demands the refusal to draw an analysis of the level of the working class from*

⁸⁵ In his book *Thirty-Three Lessons on Lenin* (1972-1973), Antonio Negri, who in this circumstance also proposes a partially successful operation of ‘vampirisation’ of Leninism with respect to ‘Leninist’ and ‘Marxist-Leninist’ groups and areas (see the subsequent dissolution of the PC(M-L)I-Voce operaia into Autonomia Operaia), cunningly adopts the Leninist concept of the ‘deviation of spontaneity’ to support his anarcho-syndicalist (Sorelian) conception of the radicalization of economic and social struggles through the use of ‘proletarian violence’.



*an inquiry into the level of capital. It means, in essence, that we wish to restate Lenin's proposition that the political workers' movement is an encounter between socialism and the spontaneous movement of the working class. That is, within the spontaneous movement of the working class—as Lenin said, with a rather beautiful image—if there is no voluntary, conscious and scientific encounter with socialism, the ideology of the class adversary holds sway" [emphasis added]. (Raniero Panzieri, *Uso socialista dell'inchiesta*, 1965). Panzieri interprets the concept of "union" in an eclectic and conciliatory way as an expression of the combination of communist subjectivity and the objectivity of the spontaneous course of the trade union and reformist movement. In other words, for Panzieri scientific socialism should serve the "spontaneous movement," aiming to radicalize it and not to divert it in a revolutionary direction in accordance with the program of political and social transformation linked to the establishment of a New State.*

9.6. Who are the vanguard proletarians?

Let us now consider how Lenin defines the concept of the "vanguard of the proletariat."

Lenin does not consider the vanguards of struggle to be the vanguards of the proletariat per se, which obviously does not mean that the vanguards of struggle cannot and should not, preferably, be proletarian vanguards. In order to establish which elements of the proletariat are truly "advanced," Lenin does not rely on the criterion of promoting trade union struggles and the organi-



zational and oratory skills of the “leaders” of the proletariat. Nor does Lenin rely on the behaviors and forms of struggle adopted by movements, or on similar sociological and pseudo-materialistic criteria. For Lenin, the “vanguards of the proletariat,” the “advanced workers” are those who are close to revolutionary Marxism, those who choose to join the party process of the proletariat and decide to work within this process for the construction of a “revolutionary proletarian movement” (today we must speak of a revolutionary popular front or bloc with proletarian hegemony) on the path to socialism and communism.

The “advanced elements” of the proletariat are those who are most conscious, most aware, most willing to work for the construction of the party and its objectives, and therefore to become revolutionary cadres. Lenin identifies the vanguard worker with the Marxist worker who joins or seeks to join the Social Democratic party, and asserts: *“Our economists, including Rabocheie Dielo, have been successful because they bowed to the mentality of backward workers. But the social-democratic worker, the revolutionary worker (and the number of such workers is constantly increasing) will indignantly reject all this talk of the struggle for demands ‘that can promise tangible results’, etc., because he will understand that these are only variations of the old song about adding a kopek to the ruble.” (What Is To Be Done?)*

In the following quotation, Lenin clarifies how we must work to raise the level of the workers so as to transform them into social democratic workers (today Marxist-Leninist-Maoists): *“...we must work above all to raise the workers to the level of revolutionaries, and we must not lower ourselves to the level of the*



‘working masses’, as the economists want.” (What Is To Be Done?)

Lenin therefore emphasizes that the party does not specifically represent workers who struggle on an economic and trade-union level, but rather those workers who consciously work and struggle, on Marxist principles, for revolution and socialism: “...*Social Democracy has everywhere and always been, and cannot but be, the representative of class-conscious, and not of the non-class-conscious, workers and that there cannot be anything more dangerous and criminal than demagogic condescension towards the backwardness of the workers.*” (Apropos of the “*profession de foi.*” 1899)

Lenin also states:

“...always and everywhere the leaders of a given class are its most advanced, most educated representatives. Even in the Russian workers’ movement, it cannot be otherwise. And to ignore the interests and demands of this vanguard stratum of the workers, to tend to lower oneself to the mental level of the lower strata (instead of constantly raising the consciousness of the workers) necessarily means to exert a profoundly harmful influence and to prepare the ground for the penetration of all sorts of non-socialist and non-revolutionary ideas into the workers’ milieu.” (Apropos of the “*profession de foi,*” Lenin; emphasis added)

“...the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help to train leaders for this struggle, both among edu-



cated workers and among intellectuals.” (*What Is To Be Done?* Lenin).

There is no doubt that by referring to the “most educated workers,” Lenin meant the most “ideologically” advanced workers, even if not yet organically revolutionary Marxists, e.g. “ideologically” and therefore politically more advanced workers, comparable to “militant intellectuals,” who are looking for the way to solve the problem of the revolutionary transformation of society. From this point of view, they cannot be empirically characterized as workers per se but as bearers of a worldview, of intellectual interests and revolutionary political expectations. They are therefore not at all the same as the “most advanced and combative union workers.”

Today, behind the various pseudo-theoretical arguments of opportunist groups on the need to rebuild the communist party in close connection with the “vanguards of the proletariat,” lies the eclectic aim of drawing “trade union vanguards” already shaped in different ideological and political ways from the various grassroots and alternative trade unions, in order to channel them into an “electoralist” or “movementist” party process.



9.7. Class consciousness

9.7.1. Class consciousness and revolutionary theory

The basis of “class consciousness” is the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat⁸⁶ (today Marxism-Leninism-Maoism).

Gramsci stated: *“The ideological preparation of the masses is therefore a necessity for the revolutionary struggle, it is one of the indispensable conditions of its victory.”* (For an ideological preparation of the masses, April-May 1925).

⁸⁶ Workerism rails against this thesis, going so far as to argue that the proletariat, in conducting its economic struggle, tends to take on antagonistic and anti-capitalist character and thus to develop its own “class consciousness.” Raniero Panzieri, for example, supports the following theory: *“The new technical bases achieved in production constitute new possibilities for capitalism to consolidate its power. This does not mean, of course, that the possibilities for overthrowing the system are not increasing at the same time. But these possibilities coincide with the totally subversive character that, in the face of the increasingly independent ‘objective framework’ of the capitalist mechanism, ‘working-class insubordination’ tends to assume.”* (Lotte operaie..., quoted, p. 7). *“With the modern capitalist organization of production, the workers’ struggle, every workers’ struggle, tends to reassert the political rupture of the system”* (Lotte operaie..., quoted, p. 15). *“Negotiations on working hours and rhythms, staffing levels, wage-productivity ratios, etc., clearly tend to oppose capital within the very mechanisms of accumulation”* (Lotte operaie..., quoted, p. 22). *“The current situation shows strong workers’ initiative, multiple new forms of anti-capitalist struggle, that is, a spontaneous ability to direct action against the fundamental aspects of capitalist action.”* (Panzieri, Lotta sindacale e lotta politica, in *“La ripresa del marxismo leninismo in Italia”*, p. 293).



Let us consider what Lenin argues, quoting Engels in this case: *“Let us recall Engels’ observations (1874) on the importance of theory in the social democratic movement. According to Engels, there are not two forms of the great social-democratic struggle (political and economic) - as is commonly thought among us - but three, with the theoretical struggle standing alongside them... We quote the following long passage from Engels’ preface to the pamphlet Der deutsche Bauernkrieg, which has long since become an exceptional bibliographical rarity: ‘...Without the precedent of German philosophy, and specifically Hegel’s philosophy, German scientific socialism—the only scientific socialism that has ever existed—would never have come into being’ ... It will be the duty of all leaders to clarify all theoretical questions more and more, to free themselves more and more completely from the influence of the clichés of the old worldview, and to keep in mind that socialism, ever since it became a science, must be treated as a science, that is, it must be studied. (What Is To Be Done?).*

We can still see in the following quotation how Lenin emphasizes the problem of theory in his polemic against the positions of eclectic, movementist, and economistic Marxists: *“This period is characterized not by haughty contempt for practice... but by the combination of petty practicality with total disregard for theory. The heroes of this period debase ‘grand words’ rather than deny them: through their efforts, scientific socialism ceases to be an organic revolutionary theory and becomes a ‘freely’ diluted concoction.” (What Is To Be Done?).*



Let us also consider the following thesis by Lenin: *“Since one cannot speak of an independent ideology elaborated by the working masses themselves in the very course of their movement, the question can only be posed in this way: either bourgeois ideology or socialist ideology... That is why any impairment of socialist ideology, any departure from it, necessarily implies a strengthening of bourgeois ideology.”* (*What Is To Be Done?*, *emphasis added*)

Lenin’s theses are opposed to the common conceptions among various opportunist groups today, which claim that the formation of the communist party can only take place through the construction of a “direct connection with the class.” Conversely, Lenin prioritizes the need to apply, in concrete reality, the science related to the economic, philosophical, and political theory of Marxism and to focus, at the organizational level, on the “class consciousness” of the most advanced elements of the proletariat, the popular masses, and the petty intellectuals.

In *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin further clarifies the problem of the origin of class consciousness. Lenin cites, emphasizing their significance, the positions of K. Kautsky, who in those years was still a leading theorist and ideologist of international Marxism: *“Several of our revisionist critics imagine that Marx asserted that economic development and class struggle not only create the conditions for socialist production, but also directly generate consciousness of its necessity... Socialist consciousness would therefore be the necessary, direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is completely false... Modern socialist consciousness can only arise on the basis of profound scientific*



knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as modern technology, and the proletariat, however much it may desire it, cannot create either one or the other; science and technology both arise from the contemporary social process. The holders of science are not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intellectuals [emphasis added by K.K.]; even contemporary socialism originated in the minds of some members of this stratum, and it was they who communicated it to the most intellectually advanced proletarians, who then introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without, and not something that arises within it spontaneously. Hainfeld's old program therefore quite rightly stated that the task of Social Democracy is to imbue the proletariat [literally: to permeate the proletariat] with the consciousness of its situation and its mission. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle. (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added).

Lenin adds: "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is capable of developing only a trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass this or that law necessary for workers, etc. The doctrine of socialism grew out of those philosophical, historical, and economic theories that were developed by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals. Due to their social position, the founders of contem-



porary scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, were bourgeois intellectuals. Even in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of social democracy arose completely independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia". (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added).

And again: "*Class political consciousness can only be brought to the worker from outside, that is, from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The only sphere from which alone this consciousness can be obtained is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata of the population with the state and the government, the sphere of mutual relations between all classes...There is no doubt that the theoretical work of Social- Democrats must aim at studying all the specific features of the social and political condition of the various classes. But very little is done in this regard, as compared to what is done to study the particularities of factory life"... "All those who speak of "over-estimating ideology," of exaggerating the function of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the purely working-class movement is in itself capable of developing, and in fact does develop, an independent ideology." (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added).*

Lenin asserts that class consciousness is brought to the workers, the popular masses, and the petty intellectuals from outside the struggle between the proletariat and the capitalists and between opposition movements and bourgeois and reactionary govern-



ments. A process which, as we have seen, consists in diverting the economic and trade union struggle of the workers and, in general, the mobilizations of opposition movements from their economic, reformist, and movementist course.

“Class consciousness” is therefore provided by revolutionary militants who study, elaborate, actualize, and specify the ideology of the proletariat, which today is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. The theory of class consciousness, systematized and organically developed by Lenin, understood in the form of revolutionary ideology introduced from outside the relationships between the proletariat, capitalists, and bourgeois and reactionary governments, derives from the theoretical principles of Marxism concerning the critique of political economy, dialectical materialism, and the political theory of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Only the Leninist theory of class consciousness fully corresponds to Marx’s economic theory. It follows that revisionist and opportunist interpretations of this theory also imply, implicitly or explicitly, the denying of the Leninist theory of class consciousness.

Marx’s economic theory has so far been subject to various opportunistic and revisionist interpretations. Three reactionary distortions of Marxism can be identified as resulting from these interpretations.



9.7.2. The idealistic conception of class consciousness and the reformist distortion of Marx's economic theory

The first distortion of Marx's economic theory is represented by the common revisionist positions already present in embryonic form in the positions of Eduard Bernstein, leader of German Social Democracy (1850-1932).

This deviation denies the validity of the main economic laws critically examined or discovered by Marx and instead upholds various bourgeois economic conceptions. It rejects the thesis that capitalism is inevitably destined to give way to socialism⁸⁷ and communism and, by doing so, obscures the objective basis of class struggle, proletarian revolution, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It thus reduces the doctrine of socialism to an idealistic ethics in the ideological-philosophical sphere and to a reactionary form of reformism and liberalism in the sphere of political theory.

Under this line of interpretation, which is the most classically liberal, social democratic, and revisionist, the category of "class consciousness" takes on an idealistic and irrationalist form. "Class consciousness" is interpreted as the reflection of an ethical adherence to values that are immediately inscribed in trade

⁸⁷ Lenin points out that for Bernstein: "*Social democracy must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms.*" He states: "*Bernstein supported this political claim with a whole battery of 'new' arguments and considerations that were fairly well linked together. Denied is the possibility of giving socialism a scientific basis and of demonstrating that, from the point of view of the materialist conception of history, it is necessary and inevitable*" (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*).



union practice and in the struggles of mass opposition movements. In fact, this line of interpretation, by denying Marxist economic theory, removes any basis for the possibility of objective knowledge and thus mystically severs the relationship between the “knowledge” of the contradictions inherent in reality itself and a supposed “anti-capitalist” practice. It claims to start from concepts such as solidarity, justice, freedom, equality, brotherhood, cooperation, or socialism and communism interpreted as values and ideals, rather than from an objective consideration of reality, its contradictions, and the resulting tendencies toward the overcoming of capitalism. On a philosophical level, this view proves to be classically idealistic and bordering on a “religious” outlook of the world and reality, since it draws lines of demarcation not based on the objective division of bourgeois society into social classes, but on a hypothetical differentiation between “values,” “cultures,” and “identities.” The consequence is an attempt to ideologically subsume and unify different social classes under a specific ethical, ideal, and cultural vision, thus promoting a sort of corporatist reconciliation.

What this line of interpretation proposes in the name of “class consciousness” is in reality a form of ideological-political obscuration and a concrete denial of the very possibility of such consciousness.



9.7.3. The spontaneous conception of class consciousness and the councilist and Bordigist theory of the collapse of capitalism

A second distortion of Marx's economic theory, which is even more current and prevalent among opportunist groups, is represented by certain tendencies of "left communism" ("objectivist" councilism⁸⁸, Trotskyism and Bordigism⁸⁹, and certain eclectic versions of Marxism-Leninism that developed from the late 1960s onwards⁹⁰).

These tendencies propose a vision of economic theory grounded not to dialectical materialism but directly to the philosophy of natural sciences⁹¹, leading to opportunistic⁹², economistic, and spontaneist political consequences.

⁸⁸ Luxemburg's conceptions of crisis and collapse have given way to councilist theories derived from the works of Henryk Grossmann of the Frankfurt School (see *The Collapse of Capitalism: The Law of Accumulation and the Collapse of the Capitalist System*) and Paul Mattick, a radical anti-Leninist who was, among other things, active in the American Industrial Workers of the World movement.

⁸⁹ For example, today's positions of TIR-Si cobas.

⁹⁰ Linked to the experience of the Red Brigades, these ideas were set out in the text *L'Ape e il comunista* (The Bee and the Communist) and subsequently taken up and developed in the first series of the magazine *Rapporti Sociali* and in the *Manifesto Programma* of the CARC-nPCI written by Giuseppe Maj (the so-called theory of crisis due to the absolute overproduction of capital).

⁹¹ In the case of the Red Brigades, for example, we find a combination of Marxism and the philosophy of logical-empiricist sciences.

⁹² For example, on the question of class analysis, the crisis in Italy and in the South, the relationship between the party and the mass movement, the nature of the revolutionary process and the relationship between crisis and war, etc.



As is well known, after the latter half of the nineteenth century, the dominant trend in the philosophy of natural sciences shifted from an approach influenced by positivism to one characterized by neopositivism. This resulted in a particular emphasis on aspects related to quantification, formalization, and modeling. In this way, as Lenin critically pointed out, mathematical and statistical analysis came to assume an ever-greater importance, moving from being a potential symbolic form of expression and exemplification of aspects inherent in objective relationships to becoming the privileged site for the supposed scientific foundation and demonstration of these relationships.

The core of this approach is given by logical empiricism as opposed to the conception, logic, and method of materialistic dialectics centered on the theory of the universality of contradiction as the law of movement and development of any phenomenon and process. While the theory of contradiction asserts that, in general, contradiction must develop in order to bring about qualitative change and that, in this process, one of the two poles of the contradiction is primary while the other is secondary, logical empiricism, on the contrary, maintains that there is either identity or a split, understood as complete separation. In this way, logical empiricism asserts that either contradiction does not exist or that the poles of contradiction are incommensurable and

For an introduction to these issues and to the critique of the CARC-nPCI, see the text by Nuova Egemonia: *On tactics and strategy: for the critique of the theses of the 6th Congress of the CARC*. [<https://nuovaegemonia.com/2023/03/27/sulla-tattica-e-sulla-strategia-per-la-critica-delle-tesi-del-vi-congresso-dei-carc/>].



therefore it cannot be argued that one pole is primary with respect to the other. Against the theory of contradiction, logical empiricism therefore puts forward the theory of conciliation, which states that the two poles have the same nature and are therefore “identical” or that they both exert a decisive influence and, in the latter case, in order to have an adequate scientific picture of reality, it is necessary first of all to consider and combine various sides and aspects.

This scientific conception and methodology, characterized by an objectivist formalism and adopted by part of the so-called “left communism,” led to Marx’s work, which sought to demonstrate how the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value (value) and therefore between production and valorization was at the basis of capitalist relations, being interpreted in a revisionist sense.

With the so-called formalization of the dynamics of capitalism brought to the fore by these tendencies, revolving unilaterally around their modeling centered on interpretations of the law of the falling rate of profit, all that has been done is to conflate the economic categories concerning the processes of capitalist valorization with the “physical” categories of use-value, production, the technical composition of capital, and the development of the productive forces.

This has been achieved through a sort of supposed mathematical-quantitative systematization of the functioning of capitalism



“from its beginning to its end”⁹³. Quite consistently, in the 1970s, the Red Brigades argued that Marx’s *Capital* was a theoretical model with which it was possible to simulate the dynamics of capitalism up to its final collapse. In this way, it was possible to argue, for example, that the contradiction between capitalist relations and productive forces took on the character of a growing divergence.

Dimensions in mutual contradiction, such as use-value and value, and production and valorization, which can be addressed in their intrinsic contradiction only when considered in their necessary unity on the basis of the primary and defining character of valorization (production of value and surplus value), thus end up being split and opposed, with the result that use-value itself or, similarly, productivity, productive forces⁹⁴, and the technical composition of means of production and workers, become directly economic categories operating on the same level as the historical and social categories related to the essence of capitalist production relations. In this way, the centrality of valorization in capitalism with respect to production disappears, and valoriza-

⁹³ See the aforementioned text, which was quite well known at the time, by the Collective of BR Prisoners entitled *L’Ape e il comunista (The Bee and the Communist)*.

⁹⁴ This view distorts Marxism, dragging it onto the realm of bourgeois economics through a fetishistic interpretation of technical development which, in the name of emphasizing the contrast between productive forces and relations of production, ends up detaching technical development from the very form of capitalist relations, thereby attributing an immediately economic, i.e., historically and socially determined character to what is, in itself, incommensurable with those relations.



tion and production are placed on the same level. Thus, the theoretical assumptions of dominant vulgar bourgeois economy are reintroduced, according to which consumer goods and means of production, production processes, productivity and productive forces, etc., are, as such, economic categories.

Within the context of overall economic theory, this translates into a series of theories of the crisis-collapse of capitalism. These are the set of crisis theories that the various tendencies of “left communism” have always opposed to the Marxist-Leninist (now Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) theories of the general crisis of capitalism⁹⁵ and of crises due to disproportionality.

This constitutes a whole class of pseudo-Marxist theories, which argue that capitalism proceeds catastrophically through phases alternating between prolonged periods of strong expansion and subsequent periods of sharp decline. According to these theories, if not interrupted by the proletarian revolution, these dynamics inevitably lead to imperialist war, conceived as a condition for rebalancing the dynamics of accumulation and a subsequent new phase of expansion. These conceptions of crisis and collapse thus end up aligning, with regard to the question of the theory of the development of the Italian economy and the South, with theses similar to those of neo-Crocean bourgeois liberalism, Togliatti revisionism, and workerist sociologism. This is clearly shown in the emphasis with which the question of agrarian re-

⁹⁵ The CARC-nPCI deliberately conflate their collapse theory of crisis due to absolute overproduction of capital with the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory of the general crisis of capitalism.



forms (seen as a substantial overcoming of the Southern and Islands Question) and the so-called ‘economic miracle’ (considered as a realignment or a considerable rapprochement of the Italian economy with that of the main European countries) has been treated. The theories of the crisis-collapse of “left-wing communism” have so far proved to be a true apology of the “Italian economic recovery” after World War II (defined by the CARC-nPCI as “capitalism with a human face”). These theories, on a general level, by positing the alternation between phases of expansion and phases of “collapse” of the economy, oppose Lenin’s theory of imperialism and Maoism, which argue that in its dying phase, capitalism loses its expansive character and transforms itself into an economic system in a state of decomposition, increasingly parasitic, anti-working class and anti-popular, reactionary, and warmongering.

As for the consequences in the field of Marxist-Leninist political theory, the theories of collapse of the objectivist tendencies of “left-wing communism,” including the Italian variants of the Red Brigades and the CARC-nPCI *Program Manifesto*, mechanistically emphasize the catastrophic nature of economic crises and their transformation into hegemonic and institutional crises, insinuating that the mass movements that follow, together with all the related trade union, political, and protest organizations that derive from them, come to assume, at least in part, a spontaneously anti-capitalist nature.

The Leninist theory of class consciousness is therefore rejected by theories of crisis-collapse in favor of a spontaneous, economic, and movementist conception of the revolutionary process



as an expression of the progressive unification and radicalization of mass organizations and struggle movements that have arisen in the context of crisis⁹⁶.

9.7.4. The denial of class consciousness in the workerist interpretation of Marx's economic theory

A further distortion of Marx's economic theory that contrasts with the theory of class consciousness affirmed by Leninism is the subjectivist interpretation of the nature and dynamics of capitalism.

Workerism and neo-workerism can be considered the main representatives of this approach starting in the early 1960s. Workerism has profoundly revised Marx's economic theory. Its fortunes have been directly proportional to the degree of distortion and

⁹⁶ See, in this regard, the revisionist conception of the CARC-nPCI's theory of protracted People's War. This conception is characterized precisely by the line of a people's bloc government that should gather, organize, and mobilize all the associations and organizations operating on the various fronts of the movement's initiative (ranging from war to Palestine, from environmentalism to military servitude, from healthcare to schools, from repression to factories, etc.), ignoring the fact that all these organizations are by no means "revolutionary in tendency," but are well characterized by bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political and ideological positions. The problem lies in diverting these movements from their mechanical, spontaneous, and opportunistic course and in breaking up the opportunistic organizations that dominate them. All this in order to shift the best forces towards the formation of a revolutionary movement and a political front. These latter objectives require, in order to be pursued, a firm opposition to the frontist theories of a "people's bloc government" or "national salvation government" by forces such as the CARC-nPCI on the one hand and, on the other hand, the formation of an effective Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party capable of exercising hegemony.



deformation of Marxism. A not insignificant aspect of this intellectual success is the fact that the subjective idealism that characterizes it takes the form of a pseudo-materialism oriented towards action and strongly polemical towards so-called “metaphysical” conceptions accused of falling into a passive and contemplative “objectivist” and “culturalist” logic.

From the point of view of economic theory, workerism has resulted in the systematic deconstruction of all categories of Marxist economic theory. These categories were then ‘reconstructed’ on the basis of an alleged primacy of the contradiction between capital and labor, understood as an expression of the conflict between economic and trade union struggles and the interests of employers’ and business organizations. In other words, workerism has distorted Marxism by interpreting all its economic categories as manifestations of a tension between workers’ initiative and the initiative of ‘capital’⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ The question also arises in different forms in the different stages of development of workerism. Consider the difference between R. Panzieri’s view of the contradiction between capital and labor and the subsequent view of M. Tronti and A. Negri, which revolves around the question of whether the active pole is primarily capital or vice versa. See, for example, Sandro Mancini’s introduction to *Lotte operaie nello sviluppo capitalistico*, which presents what appears to be a fundamental difference between Panzieri and Tronti: “For Panzieri, capital and the working class are two autonomous realities, irreducible to each other, so their relationship is one of parity. The capital-class dialectic therefore defines capitalist society as a dichotomous society, composed of two equally objective antagonistic realities... [for Tronti] what divides the science of labor from the science of capital is the reduction of the objectivity of capital to the founding subjectivity of living labor.” Obviously, none of this changes anything about the subjective nature of workerism.



On this supposed theoretical framework typically bourgeois economic concepts and sociological-empirical analyses have been grafted which have, from time to time, elevated contingent or even marginal economic phenomena to the status of universal medium or long-term trends such as, for example, events and processes relating to economic and trade union struggles, technological transformations, and changes in the organization of work. Precisely those elements, generally transcended by Marx in order to deal with the objective functioning of the capitalist system in the most pure and scientific way possible, were then introduced by workerism and placed at the foundation of its vision of capitalist socio-economic functioning, understood as being governed by the immediate contradiction between capital and wage labor⁹⁸.

Based on the approach taken by workerism, there is no possible scientific theory of capitalism. Workerism denies the very existence of an objective field of economic phenomena that can be studied independently of the immediate subjective initiative of

⁹⁸ The fact that the proletariat, due to its place in capitalist production, is the only truly revolutionary class, becomes in workerism a thesis on the proletariat as such, as the supposed bearer of an antagonism irreducible to Capital and its State. In other words, workerism declares spontaneity in economic and demand struggles to be politically subversive and revolutionary. In certain versions of theoretical workerism, this propensity, subject to the use or response of Capital, is also interpreted as the engine of capitalist development. Hence the singular thesis that workers' struggles, on the economic and protest front, determine the crisis of Capital, the development of the collectivization of the productive forces, and globalization itself.



the proletariat. Workerism thus falls back on the idealistic identity between class in itself and class for itself, between object and subject, between thought/point of view and action. All this translates into the denial of the question of class consciousness and of the possibility and necessity of an organic revolutionary conception of the world. A conception which, as we have seen, according to Lenin, is brought to the working class and the popular masses from outside their daily life and practice and their immediate experience of struggles and movements.

Class consciousness, distorted in the question of the “workers’ point of view,” becomes for the workerists an expression and synthesis of spontaneous struggles and movements, containing within itself a strategy that is sometimes interested in imposing on Capital itself a dynamic of development, expansion, and internationalization, and sometimes in affirming a direct transition to communism.

Hence the rejection, in the first place of the Marxist-Leninist thesis of revolutionary political struggle as a level autonomous from economic and demand struggles and social movements (the foundation of revolutionary struggle would not be an adequate political program, but an initiative aimed at the radicalization and extremization of economic and social demands).

Secondly, we then have the opposition, in this case fully in line with Trotskyism and Bordigism, to the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist conception, which conceives of the proletarian revolution as a process that, in order to develop and assert itself, must take on a national form. In fact, only the movement of the disso-



lution of nations is conceived as progressive, that is, only a form of revolution corresponding to that supposed level of “internationalization” to which the struggles and movements are said to have forced Capital.

Thirdly, there is the thesis of socialism as the full affirmation of the “Plan of Capital” and therefore the rejection of the experience of socialist building in the USSR (until 1956) and China (until 1976), interpreted in a social democratic, Trotskyist, Bordigist, and anarchist terms as a process of expansion and repressive rationalization of capitalist social relations.

9.7.5. What do the revisionist interpretations of economic theory demonstrate?

Considering the three revisionist interpretations of Marx’s economic theory, it is clear that: 1) a given economic theory always contains, at least implicitly, a given political theory and, as its foundation, a given philosophical, logical, and methodological conception; 2) on a formal level, opportunist and revisionist theories that differ on the economic level have similar political consequences.

These three distortions are contrasted by the scientific vision of Marxism. Passing through Leninism and Maoism, this conception has arrived at a comprehensive revolutionary theory, a guide for the world proletarian revolution. The theory of class consciousness, as attested to by the various quotations in this text, is one of the decisive links in this theory.



9.7.6. Marx's economic theory as one of the fundamental premises of Leninist theory of "class consciousness"

Marxism treats the object of its study as an objective social entity and, in order to do so, aims to highlight the objective roots of the irreducible fundamental antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which can only be resolved through political revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism, and the transition to communism. Consequently, in the sphere of economic theory, it proceeds largely by abstracting from the effects of the class struggle between workers and capitalists waged for the improvement of immediate living and working conditions (working hours and rhythms, wages, occupational hazards, accident insurance, pension institutions, social services, trade union rights, etc.).

Marxist economic theory is a revolutionary theory in that it shows how the economic laws governing the functioning of capitalist economy contribute to creating both the objective conditions for the world proletarian revolution and for the functioning of socialist society, and those which, in themselves, abstracting theoretically from the economic and trade-union struggle itself, lead capitalism to its inevitable end.

These economic laws are necessarily largely unknown to the capitalists themselves, who are not even interested in knowing them, not least because they conflict with their fundamental interests.



From the point of view of the theory of knowledge, logic, and method, it can therefore be said that for Marxist economic theory, the study of the economic functioning and the end of capitalist society is equivalent to the study of any particularly vast and complex field of a given set of objective phenomena. Let us consider how Marx presents this question of the relationship between the dialectic method of *Capital* and the classical and rational scientific method in the field of natural sciences. Marx states in the *Postscript* to the second edition of *Capital* (January 24, 1873): “After a quotation from my preface to *Critique of Political Economy*, Berlin, 1859, pp. IV-VII, where I set out the materialistic basis of my method, the distinguished author goes on: ‘For Marx, only one thing matters: finding the law of the phenomena he is investigating. And for him what is important is not only the law which governs them insofar as they have a finite form and are part of an observable nexus over a given period of time. For him, what is important above all is the law of their variation, of their development, that is, of the transition of phenomena from one form to another, from one series of connections into a new one. Once this law has been discovered, Marx investigates in detail the effects in which the law manifests itself in social life. As a result, Marx strives to do only one thing: to demonstrate, through a precise scientific investigation, the necessity of certain arrangements of social relations and to establish as comprehensively as possible those facts that serve him as starting points or as points of support. To this end, it is entirely sufficient to demonstrate both the necessity of the existing order and the necessity of a new order, into which the former must inevitably pass—remaining entirely irrelevant whether men be-



lieve in it or not, whether they are conscious of it or not. Marx regards social movement as a process of natural history governed by laws that not only do not depend on the will, consciousness, and intentions of men, but rather determine their will, their consciousness, and their intentions ... By setting himself the goal of investigating and explaining the capitalist economic order from this point of view, Marx is merely formulating with scientific rigor the objective that any exact inquiry into economic life cannot but set for itself [...] The scientific value of such an investigation lies in the explanation of the specific laws that govern the birth, existence, development, and death of a given social organism, and its replacement by another, higher one. And Marx's book does indeed have this scientific value.' In presenting what he calls my actual method, in such an accurate and so favorable a manner with regard to my personal application of it, what else has the distinguished author described if not the dialectical method? (emphasis added).

Marx's economic theory, highlighting the impossibility of resolving the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in any way other than through proletarian revolution and the establishment of socialism, thus lays the foundations for the theory of the necessity of "class consciousness."

9.7.7. Class consciousness and dialectical materialism

On a philosophical level, the problem of 'class consciousness' refers first and foremost to the concept of 'consciousness' understood as 'awareness' and therefore as 'knowledge' of an objective reality considered independently of any knowing subject.



‘Class consciousness’ is closely connected to the question of ‘scientific theory’. Any concept such as “exploitation,” “capitalism,” “social class,” “state,” “strategy,” “line,” “revolution,” “socialism,” etc., has a theoretical and scientific character. One can certainly have a more or less profound, defined, and current view of it, but this remains its fundamental substance.

What must be reiterated is that, from the point of view of dialectical materialism, the concept of “science” does not correspond to the conceptions that, in the various stages of the development of human thought, have been presented from time to time as “natural sciences.” Above all, it is not at all commensurate with what has been presented and put forward as “science” by the dominant philosophy at various times in the course of the evolution of capitalist society.

For Marxism, the concept of science finds its foundation precisely in dialectical materialism itself. Once the monistic conception that being is conceivable only as matter and therefore as nature has been established, we must then proceed, as we have already seen, by distinguishing between matter and spirit, object and subject, nature and human society, natural sciences and historical-social sciences, etc. At this point, we must consider how this latter distinction also encompasses the problem of the difference between the particular method of the natural sciences and that of the economic, social, political, philosophical, military sciences, etc. Unlike the natural sciences, the historical-social sciences cannot be founded on “experimentation.”



The latter is a form of humanity's social practice, through which one operates by abstracting (using mechanical, chemical, etc. methods) from the objective reality portions, more or less extensive, of reality itself, in order to identify its underlying laws. The reality under investigation is therefore simplified, not only on an analytical level, but also on the level of the synthesis relating to the experimental reproduction of phenomena.

Conversely, historical and social development, with the succession of different economic and superstructural forms accompanied and characterized by the respective class struggles, as clearly established by Gramsci⁹⁹ and Mao¹⁰⁰, requires a concept of science enriched by the contribution of the entire development of philosophical materialism, by the contributions of objective dialectics and by the theoretical assessment of the experience of class struggle and the results of the various classical stages of the historical and human sciences, duly examined and critically developed.

The Marxist theory and method for understanding historical-social reality, understood in the broadest sense (thus including both the study of the economic-social structure and the study of the ideological, political, cultural, etc. superstructure), therefore replace the 'scientific experimentation' characteristic of the natu-

⁹⁹ See the paragraphs in *the Prison Notebooks* concerning Gramsci's critique of Bukharin's "essay on popular philosophy."

¹⁰⁰ Mao, *On Practice*, (<https://www.marxists.org/italiano/reference/mao/pratica.htm>).



ral sciences with the conscious application of the logic of materialist dialectics to the various fields of phenomenal reality.

As Lenin argues in *his Philosophical Notebooks*, human sciences are nothing other than the expression of the application of dialectical logic to a given set of phenomena and relations of objective reality. With this logic, the process based on ‘theoretical abstraction’ and the synthetic ‘reproduction’ of objective reality within theoretical consciousness also becomes central. It is on the basis of this dialectical logic¹⁰¹ that scientific results are achieved that prove to be true, rational, and valid, first in terms of the completeness, coherence, and logical consistency of the entire exposition carried out and, secondly, as an effective final verification on the level of social and political practice. This practice, therefore, by highlighting any limits and shortcomings in reasoning, then requires corrections, modifications, and further developments at the level of theory itself.

¹⁰¹ This is therefore a logic that is profoundly different from that of bourgeois philosophy of the natural sciences, both in relation to the partially progressive nineteenth-century model, which leaned towards a spontaneous but non-dialectical materialism, and above all in relation to the twentieth-century model, which is still hegemonic today and is characterized in a substantially reactionary sense, actively engaging on the terrain of ‘logical empiricism’, opposing not only dialectics but also philosophical materialism. Logical empiricism thus comes to collude with phenomenology and hermeneutics, with the consequence of a growing influence across all fields of knowledge, including the historical and human sciences, thus becoming a significant ideological arsenal for the dominant reactionary classes.



In essence, dialectical materialism is a unified whole composed of ‘philosophical materialism’, ‘materialist dialectics’ and ‘historical materialism’.

Philosophical materialism emphasizes that knowledge is determined by objective reality and that one can know it only insofar as the subject relates to reality to be known as a factor external to the object or to the objective field of phenomena under investigation and study. Philosophical materialism therefore affirms the centrality of the theory of reflection. Materialist dialectics derive from the philosophy of objective dialectics developed over the course of the evolution of human philosophical thought. This philosophy derives mainly from the line of objective idealism and, as the ultimate and highest outcome of this line, from Hegel’s philosophy. This dialectic, purified of its mystical and reactionary form and grounded in materialism, affirms the active role of the subject in the process of knowledge and consequently places the role of praxis at the center.

Materialist dialectics contains the theory of reflection of philosophical materialism, and the whole can be defined as dialectical materialism. The latter, applied to the study of history, society, and the succession of different historical-social formations, leads to the formation of the Marxist theory of economics, politics and the state, of ideologies, of class struggle and the proletarian revolution, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of socialism, and of communism. This theory, specified both in relation to the different historical, economic, political, and cultural conditions of a given nation and a given international context of class struggle, and in relation to the practical-political tasks fac-



ing the proletariat at a given stage, is precisely what can be defined as “class consciousness.”

It is now clear why any deviation from materialism and dialectical logic can only result in an impairment, distortion, and revision of Marxism (today Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) including in the field of political theory as, for example, with regard to the very question of the nature and origin of class consciousness. The thesis that class consciousness is brought in from outside and introduced by a formally established party is a consequence of the scientific character of Marxism (today Marxism-Leninism-Maoism). Not only is Marxism a historical-social science, but it is also an extremely complex science which today, to be adequately specified and propagated, requires an appropriate process of study, training, and specification.

9.7.8. Class consciousness and the question of the contradiction between “capital and labor”

‘Class consciousness’ is something radically different from the ‘immediate consciousness’ relating to the contradiction that exists at the level of economic relations between capital and wage labor. With this latter concept, at least in Italy, reference is commonly made simply to the conflict arising from the resistance of the proletariat against the capitalists in defense of their economic interests. The contradiction between capital and wage labor, understood in this sense, has historically led the proletariat to unite in trade unions and demand union rights. Similarly, capitalists organize their own employers’ associations (such as Confindustria in Italy) to assert their immediate economic interests within



the contradiction between “labor and capital.” All of this is always historically reflected directly at the political level. The proletariat, organized into trade unions, demands appropriate legislation and institutions from governments for its protection, just as capitalists organized in their own economic organizations expect the governments in power to adequately represent their immediate interests, generally obtaining this without major problems.

In this sense, the contradiction between capital and wage labor, as well as the related organizations and the resulting political struggle for demands, does not in itself pertain to class consciousness, and even less so, therefore, to conscious political struggle, which can only be “political struggle” aimed at achieving the revolutionary objectives of the minimum program connected with the establishment of People’s Democracy and at attaining the revolutionary objectives of the maximum program. The contradiction between workers and employers has nothing to do with all this for the simple reason that, strictly speaking, it is not inherent to the question of the State.

Class consciousness is, in fact, full awareness of the relationships between the proletariat and all other classes with regard to the question of the State, namely: 1) understanding the nature of the bourgeois State as an instrument of repression and domination over the proletariat and the popular masses; 2) awareness of bourgeois civil society as a specific hegemonic dimension of the State and awareness of the difference between the two dimensions of the State, that relating to repressive domination and that relating to domination through the exercise of a reactionary he-



gemony; 3) distinction between economic and political, trade-union and reformist struggle, which operates within the framework of the struggle against the employers and against governments, and a genuinely class-based political struggle for the revolution of People's Democracy on the path to socialism and therefore directed against the bourgeois state; 4) awareness of the need for the State of People's Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Class consciousness therefore revolves around the concept of the State which, after certain fundamental contributions by Marx and Engels¹⁰², was further developed by Marxism mainly through Leninism and, subsequently, through the contributions of Stalin, the Third International, and Maoism.

9.7.9. The theory of class consciousness: a summary

At the foundation of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory of "class consciousness" thus lies Marxist economic theory, the philosophy of dialectical materialism, and political theory (scientific socialism, the theory of the State and that of Revolution).

So, what is "class consciousness"? It is the expression of a scientific view, on the economic, philosophical, and political levels, of the set of relations that exist in social life between all the different social classes and the state. It is the rational knowledge of class relations, which is situated at a comprehensive level and

¹⁰² F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/origin_family.pdf



therefore implies a precise awareness of the fundamental political objectives and the ways through which they can be achieved. Such knowledge cannot exist only in a universal form. The universal and the particular must be contained in a specific form. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism must be specified in relation to national conditions. Only in this way can “class consciousness” correspond to the fundamental interests of the proletariat and the popular masses, which require the suppression of the capitalist system and the replacement, through a protracted revolution, of the reactionary State with a new people’s democratic State on the path to socialism.

9.8 Lenin: economic struggle, political struggle for reforms and revolutionary struggle

9.8.1. Economic struggle and political struggle for reforms against bourgeois governments

Lenin defines economic struggle as follows: “*The economic struggle is the collective struggle of workers against their employers to obtain better conditions for the sale of their labor power, to improve the working and living conditions of the workers.*” He immediately clarifies in this way that the economic struggle and the political struggle against government social policies, and therefore against the whole set of related legal norms, belong as such to trade unionism, that is, to reformism.



Lenin states: *“To give the ‘economic struggle itself a political character’ therefore means striving to satisfy the economic demands, to improve working conditions through ‘legislative and administrative measures’ ... In reality, beneath its ‘frighteningly’ profound and revolutionary appearance, it conceals the traditional tendency to lower social democratic politics to the level of trade-union politics!”*... *“The phrase “to give the economic struggle itself a political character” contains nothing other than the struggle for economic reforms.”* (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Lenin thus highlights how the economic-trade union struggle itself tends towards a reformist political struggle of a trade-unionist nature¹⁰³.

Lenin goes on to point out that sometimes the economic-trade union struggle and opposition to the anti-worker policies of bourgeois governments is carried forward by sectors of the bourgeoisie itself, with the aim of undermining the spread of revolutionary Marxist ideology and organization among workers.

Lenin therefore states: *“economic and professional organizations without [revolutionary] political struggle have always and everywhere been preached by zealous champions of the bourgeoisie”* (*Lenin, Apropos of the “profession de foi”, 1899*).

¹⁰³ In imperialist countries, “spontaneous” economic struggle and opposition to governments are therefore always promoted, directly or indirectly, by specific trade-union and political forces and associations. Today, for example, these forces are reactionary or reformist and opportunistic. Sometimes, as in the case of the FIOM/CGIL-CISL-UIL confederal unions in Italy, these forces are also closely tied to the bourgeoisie and to various state apparatuses.



“...in the theory of workers’ ‘social initiative’, in the theory of ‘social mutual aid’ and of corporate unions [labor unions] which limit themselves, ‘for the moment,’ to the ten-hour working day, in the theory of ‘social struggle’ against autocracy...there is absolutely nothing socialist in this theory...In any country, one can find workers who struggle to improve their condition while knowing nothing about socialism or even adopting a hostile attitude towards it” [emphasis added]. (A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy, 1899)

“Very often the economic struggle spontaneously assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of that ‘revolutionary bacilli represented by the intelligentsia’, without the intervention of the class-conscious Social-Democrats. Thus, the economic struggle of the English workers assumed a political character without any participation on the part of the socialists. The task of the Social-Democrats ... is to convert trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle.” (What Is To Be Done?)

“The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (but not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen.” (What Is To Be Done?)

Lenin further points out how the economic struggle and the reformist political struggle tend spontaneously, as such – that is, when they are not subject to an adequate process of transformation and redirection – to become a support base for reactionary or pseudo-revolutionary political forces, with the result that,



in one way or another, they come to oppose revolutionary politics and the ideology of scientific socialism.

In summary, Lenin states: “...any talk of ‘overestimating the role of ideology’ or the role of the conscious element as compared with that of the spontaneous element, etc., continues to exercise a most baneful practical influence on our party.” (*A Talk With Defenders of Economism*, 1901)

Let us consider how the Marxist economists opposed Lenin and the revolutionary Marxists: [the Marxist economists said] “*Iskra* [then the organ of the revolutionary Marxist tendency; ed.] is ready to brand any disagreement with it not only as a renunciation of social-democratic principles [at the end of the 19th century, this term referred to Marxism; ed.], but as desertion to the camp of the enemy. This excessive tendency towards controversy is due primarily to its exaggerating the role of ideology (program, theory...) in the movement and is partly an echo of the internal struggle that flared up in the West among Russian émigrés, ... bringing a deplorable schism among comrades working in Russia...”. (Lenin, *A Talk With Defenders of Economism*, first published in *Iskra*, No. 12, December 1901). The economist Marxists therefore accused Lenin and the revolutionary Marxists of being dogmatic and of seeking to work towards the fragmentation of the Marxist movement¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰⁴ It can be seen from this quotation how the criticisms made by the revisionist Marxists of that time against Lenin are in line with the criticisms that various groups of the far left [FGC, Piattaforma Comunista, CARC-nPCI, Proletari Comunisti-PCm] today advance against Italian and



9.8.2. For Lenin, the spontaneous opportunist movement must be redirected towards a revolutionary Marxist movement

Lenin states: *“The fact that economic interests play a decisive role does not at all imply that the economic (trade-unionist) struggle is of paramount importance, because the essential, ‘decisive’ interests of the classes can only be satisfied through radical political transformations; in particular, the fundamental economic interest of the proletariat can be satisfied only through a political revolution that replaces the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the proletariat”* [emphasis added] (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Lenin therefore does not at all believe that the main task of Marxists is to foster the movement of spontaneous economic struggles in order to radicalize it in a socialist direction, as some Marxist economists argued. On the contrary, he asserts that this very movement must be diverted from its spontaneous course, which is subject to opportunism and the influence of revisionists. The problem posed by Lenin is therefore that of an initiative aimed at developing the class consciousness of the proletariat, in accordance with the revolutionary political objectives of both the minimum and the maximum programs.

international Maoists, accusing them of dogmatism, of wanting to talk nonsense because they “lack the support of the masses” and of spreading “disintegration among communists.”



See also Lenin's illuminating statements:

“Any subservience to the spontaneity of the mass movement, any degrading of Social-Democratic policy to the level of trade-unionist policy, is tantamount to preparing the ground for converting the working-class movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy. The spontaneous working-class movement is by itself able to create (and invariably does create) only trade-unionism, and working-class trade-unionist politics is precisely working-class bourgeois politics.” (What Is To Be Done?)

The economistic tendency is inevitably developed and reinforced by imperialism. In imperialist countries, the form of “spontaneity” is always mechanically fused with bourgeois politics, thus becoming an obstacle to the development of class consciousness and to the formation and initiative of a truly communist party¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁵ In Italy, among opportunist groups on the far left (Rete dei Comunisti, FGC, PCR, SI Cobas, CARC-nPCI, Proletari Comunisti-PCm, etc.) the dominant dogma is that political struggle is first and foremost a struggle on the social level, a struggle for demands and opposition to reactionary laws and measures adopted by the governments in power at a given time, and is also loudly touted as a struggle aimed at overthrowing those governments. This “struggle,” seasoned with ultra-revolutionary rhetoric and slogans and possibly somewhat exaggerated and radicalized in its forms for media purposes, is therefore today being peddled as revolutionary political struggle. It thus continues in its present forms the same maximalism that, historically, exercised a significant opportunist influence not only within the PSI before the formation of the PCd'I in January 1921, but also subsequently within the PCI itself. Maximalism represented the theorization of the struggle for the defense of workers' immediate interests on the trade-union and political level, combined with the propaganda for the perspective of proletarian revolution



Lenin argues against such conceptions: “*The working-class trade-unionist politics is precisely the working-class bourgeois politics. And the formulation of its task by this ‘vanguard’ is precisely the formulation of trade-unionist policy.*” (*What Is To Be Done?*).

And again: “*Read the work of two serious scientists (and ‘serious’ even as opportunists) such as the Webbs, and you will see that for a long time now, British workers’ associations have understood and fulfilled the task of ‘lending the economic struggle itself a political character’. For a long time long been fighting for the freedom to strike, for the removal of all legal obstacles to the cooperative and trade union movements, for the enactment of laws on the protection of women and children, for the improvement of working conditions through health and factory legislation, etc.*” (*What Is To Be Done?*).

“*Rabociaia Mysl*¹⁰⁶ does not entirely reject political struggle: ...it speaks of the struggle against the government... As for *Rabocheye Dielo*, it offers a variant of this thesis, stating in its programme that “in Russia, more than in any other country, the economic struggle is inseparable from the political struggle.” These theses of *Rabochaya Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dielo* are ab-

and socialism. Maximalism was characterized, just like economism in Lenin’s time, by the absence of the question of ‘revolutionary politics’.

¹⁰⁶*Rabociaia Mysl* and *Rabocheye Dielo* were newspapers of the “Marxist-economist” tendency.



solutely wrong if by politics is meant Social-Democratic politics.” (What Is To Be Done?)

[We must] “express particular thanks to Martynov for this excellent new formula: ‘The economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government. ’... Here, in this short and clear proposition, is expressed the quintessence of Economism... Economic struggle against the government is precisely trade-unionist politics, which is still very far from being Social-Democratic [Marxist; ed.] politics.” (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added)

These quotations are particularly important in highlighting how eclecticism, which mixes Marxism-Leninism and economism, also characterizes today in our country the formation of forces and coalitions that declare themselves in favour of the construction or reconstruction of the Communist Party. Most of these forces claim that in order to develop revolutionary political struggle, it is first necessary to develop the economic struggle and trade-union organization. They also argue that the “construction of the party” and that of “class trade-union organizations” or supposed “anti-capitalist fronts” are processes that are necessarily interconnected, just as the economists in Lenin’s time argued that “the economic struggle is inseparable from the political struggle.” A specific variant of these positions is the view that the party is born out of struggles.

Let us now consider the following quotation: *“The theses of Rabocheye Dyelo are correct if by politics is meant trade-unionist politics, that is, the common striving of all workers to secure*



from the state measures intended to alleviate the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, that is, do not remove the subjection of labour to capital.” (What Is To Be Done?)

Here Lenin addresses the question of the difference between the reformist political struggle in the economic sphere and the revolutionary political struggle, highlighting how the former is ultimately a task of trade unions and social organizations that defend workers’ conditions, whereas the latter is a task of the political party¹⁰⁷.

Let us see how Lenin emphasizes the difference between “the political struggle for reforms” and “social democratic [Marxist; ed.] politics”: “*There is politics and politics. We see, then, that Rabochaya Mysl, in relation to politics, stands not so much in a position of denial as in one of subordination to its spontaneity and lack of consciousness....Rabochaya Mysl absolutely refuses to work out a specific Social-Democratic [Marxist: ed.] politics corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to present-day conditions in Russia” [emphasis added] (What Is To Be Done?).*

Lenin further states: “*The demand to ‘impart a political character to the economic struggle itself’ most clearly expresses submission to spontaneity in the realm of political action.*” (What Is

¹⁰⁷ Here too, we do not find any substantial difference with the present situation, where it is political groups and organizations that often directly take on the tasks and programmatic objectives that typically fall within the scope of “reformist politics.”



To Be Done?). Lenin therefore aims to distinguish the tasks of the economic struggle and the political struggle against governments from those of the political struggle for a revolutionary political program that is consistently democratic and socialist.

Lenin never leaves room for economistic and eclectic conceptions that propose the “radicalization” of the economic and social struggle and aim to give the economic struggle a supposedly revolutionary character. For Lenin, the economic struggle and the “Social-Democratic [Marxist] political struggle” arise from completely different foundations and premises¹⁰⁸.

Let us look again at Lenin’s position against the economists: *“Economists constantly depart from Social-Democracy [from*

¹⁰⁸ See the first essay produced by Nuova Egemonia: *“In short, Marxism states that in, accordance with the maximum program, a dual level of initiative, organization, and struggle must be developed, which can also be metaphorically described as a double perspective, a dual track...only through the proper combination and convergence of two different perspectives, together with the level of theoretical-ideological struggle and propaganda for the maximum program, can a revolutionary process be set in motion. From a theoretical point of view, this dual perspective is justified by two fundamentally different principles and levels. The first relates to the economic and trade-union, social, democratic, political, and legislative struggle for the defense and representation of the immediate interests of the masses in their confrontation with the employers, governments, and repression... The second, on the other hand, relates to the necessity of political struggle for current revolutionary political objectives. This second principle points to the need to establish, on the basis of the initiative and leadership of the proletarian party, a conscious and militant movement (popular-revolutionary front) under proletarian hegemony” (The pandemic, the general crisis of capitalism and the question of People’s Democracy, June 2020, Nuova Egemonia).*



Marxism; ed.] towards trade-unionism, both in organizational and political tasks. The political struggle of Social-Democracy [of the revolutionary Marxist party; editor's note] is much broader and much more complex than the economic struggle of the workers against the employers and against the government. Likewise (and for this reason), the organization of a revolutionary Social-Democratic [Marxist: editor's note] party must necessarily be separate from the organization of workers for the economic struggle. (What Is To Be Done?)

Below, Lenin highlights how Marxist economists confuse legal associations and mass organizations of an economic, social, cultural, educational, anti-government nature, etc. with the clandestine Marxist party: “...First, R. M. [exponent of economic Marxism; ed.] confuses legal opposition with the struggle against autocracy, with the struggle to overthrow the autocracy. This confusion, unforgivable in a socialist, results from the expression ‘struggle against the autocracy’, which he uses without an explanation: this expression may mean (with a reservation) struggle against the autocracy, but it can also mean struggle against individual measures of the autocracy within the framework of that same autocratic system [emphasis added]. Secondly, by regarding legal opposition as a social struggle against autocracy and saying that our workers must wage “this social struggle,” R. M. goes so far as to argue that our workers should not carry on a revolutionary struggle against autocracy, but must oppose autocracy legally [emphasis added]. (Lenin, “A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy,” 1899)



Lenin adds: “...the early Social Democrats [Marxists: ed.] of this period... set for Russian Social-Democracy the most far-reaching historical tasks in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy in particular... historical tasks of the working class in Russia, the first of which was the achievement of political freedom.”

He then immediately comments against the Marxist economists: “It suffices to recall that *Rabochaya Dyelo* considered it impossible to set the overthrow of the autocracy as the primary task of the mass working-class movement and (in the name of the mass movement) degraded this task to that of a struggle for immediate political demands.” [emphasis added] (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Lenin continues: “...when *Rabocheye Dyelo* deduced the political tasks of the revolutionary party of the proletariat from the ‘economic’ (trade-unionist) struggle, it unapologetically narrowed and crippled the Social-Democratic [Marxist; ed.] conception, it degraded the tasks of the proletariat’s all-round political struggle.” (Lenin, *Good Demonstrations of Proletarians and Poor Arguments of Certain Intellectuals*, *Complete Works*, vol. 8, p. 23; emphasis added).

What was the substance of the positions of the Economist “Marxists” on the question of political struggle? It consisted in the conflation between immediate economic and political demands (the struggle for economic, social, and democratic reforms, the struggle against specific reactionary and anti-popular measures or laws, etc.) and the revolutionary political struggle



for the overthrow of tsarism, in close connection with the question of the struggle for socialism.

This confusion rested on the identification of the question of the struggle against the State with that of the struggle against the ruling parties and governments. In this way, the Economist revolutionaries distorted and downgraded the revolutionary democratic struggle, closely linked to the struggle for socialism, to the level of the immediate struggle for social improvements, workers' rights, and democratic freedoms.

In summary, we can see how the substance of the movementist conceptions that are hegemonic today in Italy on the far left still resides in economism, insofar as it denies the primary and decisive role of political struggle for the revolutionary minimum program. Such political struggle therefore constitutes the essential mediation through which the problem of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution on the Path to Socialism can be grasped both theoretically and practically in a concrete and living way.

9.8.3. The identity between economism and militaristic subjectivism

Particular attention must be paid to the question, raised by Lenin, of the relationship between the economic tendency and the revolutionary terrorism advocated by populist socialist organizations. Lenin states: *"In general, there is not an accidental, but necessary, inherent connection between the Economists and the terrorists, of which we shall have need to speak later when dis-*



cussing the education for revolutionary activity. The Economists and the terrorists of our time have a common root: subservience to spontaneity, which we discussed in the previous chapter as a general phenomenon and whose influence on political action and struggle we will now examine. At first sight, our statement may appear paradoxical, so great is the difference between those who stress the “drab everyday struggle” above all else and those who call for the struggle that requires the utmost self-sacrifice: the struggle of isolated individuals. But this is no paradox at all. (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added)

Although they appear so distant from each other and indeed differ in their specific character, both these tendencies, according to Lenin, share a common submission to spontaneity, that is, in contemporary political terms, to movementism, spontaneism, and economism.

Lenin states: “Political activity has its own logic, apart from the consciousness of those who, with the best intentions, call either for terror or for the economic struggle itself to be given a political character. The road to hell is paved with good intentions and, in this case, good intentions cannot save one from being drawn ‘along the line of least resistance’, along the line of the purely bourgeois ‘Credo’ programme. Surely it is no accident either that many Russian liberals—avowed liberals and liberals masquerading as Marxists—wholeheartedly sympathize with terrorism and now are striving to foster the development of terrorist moods. (What Is To Be Done?)



In this sense, Lenin's criticism of populist terrorism, which was still practiced by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in the early years of the 20th century, focused on the ultimately inevitably passive character of that type of initiative. A character which, in those years, translated into a sort of tailism towards Russian liberalism. This was precisely because it ended up colluding with economism on the basis of a shared fundamental idea: the idea that workers' spontaneity would tend to mechanically produce the general conditions for an economic and political struggle antagonistic to the Tsarist system. It would therefore have simply been a matter of supporting such a movement on the organizational level and through appropriate "offensive" action. In this way, therefore, the question of building a genuine Marxist party was not placed at the center, and therefore no real struggle was conducted for an alternative hegemony to the reactionary, revisionist, and opportunist bourgeois and petty-bourgeois hegemony¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁹ We can thus note how Lenin's considerations are also of a certain relevance with regard to the problem of a critical assessment of the role of the militarist deviations that emerged in the Italian historical context of the second half of the 1970s. These considerations, referring to the universal principles of Marxism, that is today Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, make it possible to highlight how movementism, spontaneism, and economism constituted the common basis between the Red Brigades and Autonomia Operaia. These revolutionary tendencies therefore operated without any effective political and ideological independence from the so-called "bourgeois left."



9.9. Lenin and the central, primary role of revolutionary political struggle

Considering economic and political struggle at the trade-union level and social and political struggle in relation to the immediate interests of the masses, we arrive at an overall picture of what a programme for the defense of the immediate interests of the masses might look like.

In Lenin's time, the Party programme was divided into three parts: the defense of the immediate interests of the masses, the minimum program, and the maximum program. The program of struggle could essentially be identified with a trade-union programme for social reforms and democratic rights, centered on the struggle of resistance for the defense of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class and the masses. Lenin states in this regard: *"We should support every improvement, every real economic and political improvement in the position of the masses."* (Lenin, *Principles Involved in the War Issue*, *Collected Works* V.23, p.156)

The minimum program was defined by the objectives of the revolutionary political struggle for democracy (and, after the 1905 revolution, by the perspective of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government). The maximum program was aimed at the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism.

Let us see how Lenin considers the question of the tasks of the revolutionary political struggle: *"In their practical activity, the Social Democrats [Marxists; ed.] aim, as is well known, to lead*



the class struggle of the proletariat and to organize that struggle in both its manifestations: socialist ... and democratic ... The Russian Social Democrats [Marxists; ed.] have always emphasized the dual manifestation and content of the class struggle of the proletariat, they have always insisted on the inseparable connection between their socialist and democratic tasks.” (Lenin, *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats*, 1897)

Looking at the present, it becomes evident that there is instead a tendency to conceive the notion of “political struggle” in a reductive way. In fact, the program of struggle – that is, the political struggle for the defense of immediate interests – is confused with “anti-capitalist political struggle”, or else the question of the “revolutionary political struggle” is identified directly with that of the “struggle for socialism.” In both cases, the necessity of “revolutionary struggle for democracy” is denied.

Lenin states: “*Social-Democracy [the Marxist party; ed.] without political struggle is a river without water, it is a glaring contradiction, it is either to the utopian socialism of our forefathers who despised ‘politics’, or to anarchism, or to trade-unionism.*” (Lenin, *Apropos of the “Profession de Foi”*, 1899).

In this text, Lenin is of course referring to the “revolutionary political struggle.” The following passages are taken from *The History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the USSR*, written under Stalin’s supervision, and clearly explain what was meant by the concept of “political struggle” in the polemic against the Economists:



“The workers’ economic struggle against the employers and the government was a trade-unionist struggle to improve the conditions under which labour-power was sold to the capitalists. However, the workers sought to struggle not only for better conditions in the sale of their labour-power, but also to overthrow the very capitalist system that compelled them to sell their labour-power and submit to capitalist exploitation.” [According to the Economists] “Social-Democrats should have set themselves, as their immediate and principal task, not the political struggle against Tsarism, nor its overthrow, but rather the organization of the ‘economic struggle of the workers against the employers and against the government’ [emphasis added].”

The first of these quotations refers to the political struggle for socialism, the second to both the immediate and primary character of the democratic-revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of Tsarism (and for the establishment of a democratic-revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ government).

Lenin further states, with regard to political struggle and its corresponding tasks: *“Along with the propaganda of scientific socialism, Russian Social undertake the task of spreading democratic ideas among the working masses, of providing a correct understanding of absolutism in all its manifestations, of its class content, and of the necessity of its overthrow...”* (Lenin, *Apropos on the “Profession de Foi”*, 1899)



“The conference [of revolutionary Marxists, ed.] categorically rejects any attempt to inject opportunism into the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat, an attempt that has found expression in the so-called ‘criticism of Marxism’, in Bernsteinism and in economism...The conference declares its solidarity with the Manifesto of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party and reaffirms that the immediate political task of the Party is the overthrow of the autocracy. The conference declares that social democracy [the Marxist party, ed.] grounds its activity, aimed at implementing this immediate task and its ultimate aims, on all-round political agitation among the entire people, agitation which calls on the proletariat to fight against all manifestations of economic, political, national, and social oppression, whatever section of the population this oppression is directed against... The conference advises all Party committees and groups to devote due attention to the need for preparatory measures for the armed uprising of the entire people against the tsarist autocracy” [emphasis added]. (Report of the Iskra Editorial Board to the Meeting (Conference) of R.S.D.L.P. Committees, March 1902).

“...The more backward representatives of the proletariat often do not realize that the struggle for the overthrow of the autocracy can be carried out only by a revolutionary party. Nor does R. M. realize this. But the advanced Russian workers do. The less advanced representatives of the proletariat often do not know that the Russian working-



class movement is not limited to strike action, to mutual benefit societies, and workers' circles, that the Russian working-class movement has long been striving to organize itself into a revolutionary party and has demonstrated this striving by action. ...the overthrow of the autocracy must be the first task of the Russian working class."

In summary, today in Italy the program must be articulated on three levels: 1) the programme for the defence of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class and the popular masses; this programme must include a series of trade-union, social, and political demands (defense of trade-union and democratic rights, opposition to repressive laws and measures, struggle against anti-popular and war-mongering policies, etc.); 2) the minimum programme, revolving around the immediate and central task of the political struggle, which today consists in the preparation of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution for a New State of People's Democracy; 3) the maximum program, aimed at carrying the revolution forward uninterruptedly to socialism and communism.

9.10. Lenin: theory, propaganda, and agitation

9.10.1. An excerpt from Lenin on the difference between propaganda and agitation

Lenin sets out, in the following terms, what agitation and propaganda consist of and how they differ:



*“If the propagandist deals with, say, the question of unemployment, he must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, show why they are inevitable in modern society, prove the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must give ‘many ideas’, so many ideas that they will be understood, as an integral whole, only by a relatively few people. The agitator, on the other hand, dealing with the same issue, will take the most glaring example, the one that is most wildly known to his audience — say, the death of an unemployed worker’s family from starvation, the growing impoverishment etc. — and, taking advantage of this fact known to all, will strive to present a single idea to the “masses”: that of the absurd contrast between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty. He will strive to rouse discontent and indignation among the masses against this glaring injustice, leaving it to the propagandist to give a complete explanation of this contradiction. This is why the propagandist acts chiefly by means of the printed word and the agitator by means of the spoken word. ...Kautsky and Lafargue, for example, are propagandists. Bebel and Guesde are agitators... According to “Martynov’s terminology” [i.e., according to the economists, our note], Kautsky and Bebel are both propagandists” (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, emphasis added).*

In order to define the concepts of “propaganda” and “agitation,” Lenin discusses “unemployment” in the same terms in which he might discuss the “economic crisis,” the “oppressive and des-



potic nature of the Russian autocracy,” the “large landowners tied to the tsar,” or the “development of revolutionary contradictions in the phase immediately preceding the 1905 revolution,” etc. In other words, all the relevant issues of economic and political reality – and often, despite appearances, those of “cultural life” as well – can be addressed starting from two functionally different approaches, which must converge in the development of class consciousness, organization, and the revolutionary activity among the masses.

Lenin says that the propagandist works primarily through texts and magazines, while the agitator works mainly through “speeches.” Obviously, this statement must be properly contextualized, taking into account the average level of literacy in Lenin’s time, which was different from today. Nowadays, this statement cannot be considered universally valid, since it is obvious that much agitational work also takes on a “written form.” Lenin immediately adds another crucial element for properly framing the issue. He distinguishes Kautsky, calling him a “propagandist,” from “Bebel” and “Guesde,” whom he defines as “agitators.” This distinction allows us to better and more substantially understand what “propaganda” is and what “agitation” is. Let us consider, for example, Kautsky, who, in the years when Lenin was writing *What Is To Be Done?*, was unanimously regarded as a leading theorist of revolutionary Marxism. In this case, it becomes immediately clear that the concept of “propagandist” and that of “theorist” tend to come very close to one another and often to overlap and coincide. In this regard, we may introduce – drawing on certain passages by Lenin – only a subtle



distinction: the propagandist, in accordance with the political tasks (of the moment) of a given phase, starts from theory in order to pave the way for political agitation and practical activity. Let us consider instead Bebel (August Bebel, 1840-1913) and Guesde (Jules Guesde, 1845-1922), prominent political figures who, in those same years, represented the current of revolutionary socialism. Both Bebel and Guesde played a leading role in the construction – the former in Germany and the latter in France – of the first Marxist-oriented socialist parties. Both were elected to the bourgeois representative institutions of their respective countries, both were distinguished by their intense political activity and also by the production of newspapers, books, and pamphlets, as well as, of course, the drafting of texts and reports for parliamentary work, internal party activity, and for the countless meetings, rallies, etc. Yet Lenin does not stop at the surface, at the appearance that Kautsky and Bebel would both be “propagandists,” but goes further. That is, he considers the content of the activity carried out by each of them and identifies within that content the distinction between “propaganda” and “agitation”. If the former was a “theorist” and a “propagandist,” Bebel operated on the immediate terrain of day-to-day political activity. His books and pamphlets, his speeches in parliament or at rallies, as was also the case with Guesde, had an immediate political value. As a whole, therefore, they had a rather limited theoretical importance and, in fact, from this point of view they did not leave significant traces in the elaboration and development of Marxism. Lenin also adds that propagandists and agitators do not necessarily have to possess or be able to possess the same qualities, attitudes, intellectual dispositions, personal characteristics, etc.



However, one should also not confuse the “propagandist” or the “agitator” with the revolutionary political leader. The latter is a propagandist, but in addition he is also an ‘ideologist’, that is, according to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory, a revolutionary intellectual who combines within himself the qualities of a theorist and those of a political leader capable of guiding the party and the proletariat on a comprehensive level. On a general level, Lenin therefore tends to bring theoretical activity and propaganda together (for example, when in 1902 he attributes to Kautsky the role of “propagandist”). On the other hand, on a more specific level, he tends to introduce a distinction between these two functions, which highlights how propaganda consists in the carrying out of a theoretical activity directly oriented toward political ends, while theoretical activity pertains to a function that is, so to speak, of an even higher strategic level. Lenin also points out that there is no further sphere of action that has its own specific and distinctive characteristics. For Lenin, calls to action, to initiative, to mobilization, and to struggle are the final link in a single chain that begins with theory and propaganda, continues with agitation, and ends with directives for struggle and the practical-organizational activities necessary for their effective implementation.

Lenin considers characteristics of economism both the confusion between propaganda and agitation (i.e., between a Kautsky and a Bebel) and that between agitation and directives for struggle. In common usage, “propaganda,” “agitation,” and “practical-operational activity” are conflated with one other. This con-



fusion fosters economism and movementism, and at the same time it is a sign of their presence and influence¹¹⁰.

9.10.2. The characteristics of propaganda

Propaganda therefore considers a specific fundamental issue in its organic connection with many other questions strictly related to it. It must therefore address it from a theoretical standpoint, providing a framework and an in-depth presentation within the field of revolutionary Marxism (today, specified Marxism-Leninism-Maoism). As Lenin succinctly puts it, propaganda will simultaneously provide many “ideas,” many theoretical concepts relating to different levels of a given field of objective phenomena under consideration. From this point of view, in order to assimilate the intellectual works that emerge from propaganda activity, a certain cultural background is required. It therefore becomes inevitable that only the most ideologically advanced

¹¹⁰ An example of such confusion, drawn from the years of the formation of the New Left in Italy, is that presented in the opinion of Raniero Panzieri who, like a good precursor of acrobatic falsifiers like Toni Negri and his disciples, presents a historical-agitational text such as *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, written in Manchester between 1842 and 1844 by a then barely twenty-year-old Friedrich Engels, as an important theoretical contribution to Marxism by Engels himself. Another example, which we will examine more closely in the following chapters, is that of the conventions and conferences on the question of the party organized by forces such as the FGC, FC, Prospettiva Unitaria, etc., where instead of identifying and addressing problems on a theoretical and principled basis, the aim is to catalyze attention, build consensus, and create homogeneity precisely on the basis of “agitation” (sic!).



elements of the proletariat, of the popular masses, and of the petty intelligentsia can immediately appropriate the full range of those texts, documents, articles, etc., which are an expression of propaganda activity. It will therefore also be necessary to always accompany propaganda with explanation, training, study, and collective discussion of texts and publications. In the case of more active and combative social and class elements, who are less inclined and interested in the study of texts, articles, etc. of a theoretical-scientific nature, these same elements will find greater difficulty in grasping the contents of such works and, at the same time, will oppose greater ideological and cultural resistance. The struggle against these resistances must therefore inevitably be accompanied by the ever necessary commitment to formation and clarification activity specifically directed at such sectors.

In the initial stages of the formation of the party, propaganda represents the main task and the fundamental terrain on which the development of class consciousness can take place among the most intellectually and ideologically advanced elements of the working class, the popular masses, and the youth.

9.10.3. Agitation

According to Lenin, agitation does not consist in the simple presentation of a fact or a series of facts of the same type that are sufficiently similar to one other, but in framing¹¹¹ the whole

¹¹¹ In the English edition of Lenin's complete works available on the Marxist Internet Archive website, the quote previously cited reads: "The agitator,



within a single fundamental idea. Here, the term “idea” refers to a “concept,” that is, to a “specific conception,” a “single central point of theory.”

Lenin further clarifies the nature and characteristics of “agitation”: *“But the overly zealous advocates of “close organic contact with the proletarian struggle” will ask us, as indeed they do, “if we have to undertake the organization of exposures that concern the entire people, in what way will then the class character of our movement be expressed? It will be expressed precisely in the fact that the organization of such nation-wide exposures will be our work, the work of us Social-Democrats, in the fact that the presentation of all the questions raised by the agitation will be done in a consistently Social-Democratic spirit and without any concessions to deliberate or undeliberate distortions of Marxism, in the fact that the all-round political agitation will be conducted by a party that unites into one inseparable whole the assault on the government in the name of the entire people, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, the safeguarding of its po-*

however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience...” By contrast, the Italian edition, as already mentioned, renders it as: *“L’agitatore, all’opposto, trattando la stessa questione, prende l’esempio più noto, quello che più colpisce i suoi ascoltatori.”* The English term “illustration” (of a fact) more accurately captures the idea of “framing” than the 1954 Italian edition (which omits the term “illustration” altogether and substitutes “example” as a direct equivalent of “fact”).



litical independence, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class, and the utilization of all its spontaneous clashes with its exploiters, which constantly rouse and bring into our camp increasing strata of the proletariat.” (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added).

Lenin therefore clarifies that all the issues raised during agitation must be formulated and treated in a manner that is coherent with, and consistent with, the theory of revolutionary Marxism, in order to safeguard and develop the political independence of the proletariat and its hegemony over ever new strata of the exploited masses.

While the propagandist organically connects various questions of theoretical relevance, which can hardly be immediately assimilated, the agitator organically connects a specific fact, a single phenomenon of economic, political, social, or cultural life with a single theoretical question presented in a more or less synthetic form (for example, the Marxist theory of the State, the theory of the political and economic causes of the pandemic, the Marxist theory of crisis) and which tends to be more directly and immediately accessible. It therefore becomes evident, first of all, that the same event can be addressed both from the standpoint of propaganda and from that of agitation. Secondly, ‘agitation’ itself cannot help but refer to a series of Marxist theoretical categories (e.g., exploitation, social class, imperialism, the reactionary state, etc.), which it is not, however, required to develop directly, since it focuses on a single fundamental question, a single problem of general relevance.



9.10.4. The organic connection between propaganda and agitation

Agitation and propaganda are by no means sharply separated from one another; on the contrary, they can only be understood as two extreme poles between which various intermediate gradations are possible. However, these poles rest on the same ground of the theory of revolutionary Marxism.

Propaganda addresses various issues on a theoretical level (or, more precisely, a theoretical-political level), dealing – at the level of content – with the relationship between multiple themes, aspects, and problems, while agitation, starting from a specific event or an immediate phenomenon, aims to frame it more deeply, linking it to a general underlying question, thereby moving, from this point of view, toward a rational Marxist explanation capable of fostering the development of class consciousness on the basis of already existing elements of experience and “common sense.” Propaganda therefore prepares agitation and both in turn prepare the practical activity related to the preparation and launching of initiatives for the mobilization of the masses. There is a development of work that takes on a pyramidal form. First, a set of themes connected in a unified way; then, for each theme, the identification of immediate phenomena and events already present in some way in the empirical experience of the more active and combative sectors of the masses; then, the corresponding activity of ‘agitation’ with respect to these issues considered individually; and finally, the thorough practical-organizational preparation of the initiatives that correspond to such contents. With the development of the party formation process,



propaganda activity, which is initially absolutely primary and central, comes increasingly to be supported and integrated by ‘agitation’ and, therefore, by the related practical efforts aimed at promoting and organizing the political orientation of the more advanced sectors of the masses. For Lenin, there is also another fundamental relationship between ‘propaganda’ and ‘agitation’. The former starts from the ‘general’, deepening and specifying it so as to move progressively toward its various forms and observable manifestations. By contrast, the latter constitute the starting point for ‘agitation’ activities. Thus, these are two movements which, in their inverse relationship, complement each other with the aim of contributing to the development of class consciousness and the related possibility of organizing and mobilizing sectors of the masses.

If, therefore, propaganda and agitation are identified as the same, agitation will be carried out in place of effective propaganda, and what is in reality “agitation” from a Marxist standpoint will end up being called propaganda. Just as the economists did with Guesde and Bebel, labeling them as propagandists.

An extreme version of this latter conception is one that, starting from the idea that political and economic ‘exposures’ are a necessary part of political activity, ends up treating the mere recording and depiction of facts – perhaps accompanied by ethical or rhetorical emphasis – as the substance of ‘agitation’. From Lenin’s point of view, however, no form of political activity can consist simply in recounting, narrating, photographing and rep-



resenting “facts,”¹¹² especially when this is generally framed in ethical terms and possibly accompanied by calls for mobilization. “Facts”, in themselves, are open to any interpretation – that is, to any ideology, whether proletarian or bourgeois. The representation of a given “fact” (a fatal workplace accident, yet another femicide, a homophobic attack, another massacre of migrants, the repression of a workers’ demonstration, the collapse of a bridge or a cable car due to lack of maintenance, pictures of Palestinian children struck by Israeli bombs, etc.) can provoke outrage without, in itself, adding anything to the consciousness or real revolutionary motivation of those who are already, in some way, politically aligned. But it can also – and often this is what happens – produce fatalism and feelings of helplessness and depression. Likewise, it may provoke indifference or sheer cynicism of the “survival of the fittest” variety in those who, even if they come from the proletariat and the popular masses, still remain under the sway of the most regressive forms of bourgeois ideology. The representation of political and social contradictions and antagonisms, when not accompanied by an adequate framework and by a fundamental explanation amounts to a cow-

¹¹² Consider, for example, Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) who, following press reports of the spontaneous revolt of the Silesian weavers, wrote the ‘social’ drama *The Weavers*, portraying the conditions of misery and exploitation in which the workers lived. By proceeding in this way, however, Hauptmann does not arrive at realism in this work, but rather at naturalism. For this reason, he is rightly criticized by Bertolt Brecht. The mere representation of reality cannot, in fact, contribute to the development of class consciousness, since it fails to highlight what is essential – namely, the ways out of a situation that appears ‘tragic’, which are capable of consciously motivating and directing revolutionary praxis.



ardly renunciation of one's fundamental tasks – an operation aimed at promoting and fueling economistic and reformist tendencies. The notion that political agitation is simply the combination of the depiction of a certain fact or event with a few more or less radical and revolutionary slogans is typically 'spontaneist' and movementist. In this view, there is in fact the assumption that the exploited and oppressed are already aware of their condition and therefore naturally inclined to 'rebellion'.

Recalling critically the sophistic approach, Hegel said that there are always reasons for everything, meaning that any 'ugliness' or 'atrocities' can always be accompanied by 'explanations' and 'justifications' aim at mitigating its scope and responsibilities. Hence the need to counter the current theses within opposition movements and alternative trade unions, according to which the most important thing is to stimulate and push toward 'struggle', that is, more precisely, toward movement-based initiative. According to these tendencies, insisting on providing more or less truthful explanations – or ones assumed to be such – to those who 'would not be able to understand them' amounts to 'critically contemplating the world' rather than promoting the praxis from which, by divine grace or as a result of police batons, class consciousness' would supposedly arise.



9.11. The Leninist newspaper and the formation of a party of revolutionary cadres

9.11.1. The Leninist theoretical-political newspaper

For Lenin, the newspaper must refer to the ideologically most advanced subjects of the proletariat and therefore, in itself, not to the most combative sectors of trade-union mobilizations and¹¹³ movements. Lenin states: “*The newspaper... must therefore be at the level of the advanced workers; not only must it not lower its level artificially but, on the contrary, it must raise it constantly, dealing with all the tactical, political, and theoretical problems of world Social-Democracy*” (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, emphasis added).

Chapter 5 of Lenin’s *What Is To Be Done?* is entitled *The Plan For an All-Russian Political Newspaper*. Lenin’s main text on the struggle against economistic Marxism thus concludes with a “plan” for the publication of a political organ of the Marxist party.

For several years already, Lenin had stressed the necessity of such a publication: “*We believe that the most urgent task of the moment is to undertake the solution of these questions, for which purpose we must set ourselves the immediate aim the founding of a Party organ that will*

¹¹³ Lenin’s conception thus differs profoundly from the one prevalent among far-left groups, which theorize and put into practice an amateurish and caricatural vision of the revolutionary newspaper.



*appear regularly and be closely connected with all the local groups. We believe that in the forthcoming period all the activity of the Social-Democrats [Marxist revolutionaries, ed.] should be directed to this end. Without such an organ, local activity will remain narrowly ‘amateurish’. The formation of the Party – if the correct representation of the Party in a certain newspaper is not organized – will to a considerable extent remain bare words...” (Lenin, *Our Immediate Task*)*

“The party should make it its immediate task to establish a weekly newspaper; and this would be fully possible given really joint work on such a paper by all Russian Social-Democrats.” (Report of the Iskra Editorial Board to the Meeting of the R.S.D.L.P. Committees, March 1902)

For Lenin, the question of the “newspaper,” of its orientation and characteristics, specifically condenses and synthesizes the entire question of the function of revolutionary theory, of the relationship between consciousness and spontaneity, between political struggle and economic struggle, between propaganda and agitation, and between the programme of struggle and the revolutionary programme (minimum and maximum). Consequently, the very question of the orientation to be given to a revolutionary political newspaper reflects the problem and the necessity of dis-



tinguishing oneself from revisionism, opportunism, economism, and movementism¹¹⁴.

In the following rhetorical question, Lenin summarized his point of view on the whole range of journalistic activities (within which the newspaper plays a central role): *“Is the Union of Russian Social-Democrats willing and able so to organize publication activity as to render impossible unprincipled and opportunist deviations from revolutionary Marxism—deviations that create confusion of mind so dangerous for our movement—and to eliminate all flirting with tacit and avowed Bernsteinism and the servile acceptance of the elementary forms and spontaneity of the movement, which must inevitably lead to the conversion of the labor movement into an instrument of bourgeois democracy?”* (Lenin, *The Unity Conference of R.S.D.L.P. Organizations Abroad* – September 1901. *Questions Submitted to the Union of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad* at the “Unity” Congress, September 21, *Complete Works* V. 5; emphasis added)

Lenin holds that the newspaper must continuously fulfill the task of contributing to the specification of revolutionary theory and

¹¹⁴ Today, therefore, the question cannot be that of emphasizing the importance of having a “political newspaper,” which is already essentially taken for granted, but rather of setting up, producing, and adequately disseminating a Leninist-type newspaper. A newspaper of this type can only be organically accompanied by the production of theoretical essays and of a theoretical journal, that is, by the construction of a complex and articulated apparatus at the service of the struggle for hegemony.



to the theoretical framework of all questions of immediate interest and of political-practical importance.

On this point, Lenin states: *“The newspaper can and must be the ideological leader of the Party, evolving theoretical truths, tactical principles, general organizational ideas, and the general tasks of the whole Party at any given moment.”* (*A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks*, 1902)

9.11.2. Combating revisionist approaches to the question of the political newspaper

Emphasizing the theoretical-political character of the organ of a communist party means opposing the revisionist, economicist, and movementist approaches that, by political newspaper, generally understand a collection of agitational materials accompanied, at best, by superficial comments, more or less “revolutionary” slogans, and considerations of a vaguely Marxist or Marxist-Leninist flavor. All of this is generally burdened, in terms of content, by an excessive focus on economic and trade-union demands and issues relating to more or less critical support for opposition movements, the struggle for democratic rights and against repression, etc.¹¹⁵ Behind this approach lies not only an essentially amateurish form of work, but also the mistaken idea that the newspaper must be written according to the level of class

¹¹⁵ See as negative examples of this type of approach newspapers such as *Scintilla* (Piattaforma Comunista), *Il Bolscevico* (PMLI), and *Resistenza* (CARC).



consciousness of the members of the most active and combative sectors of the masses. This idea leads to calibrating the newspaper's line on the level of these sectors, which today are spontaneously characterized by the hegemony of reformists, movementists, left-wing populists, and so-called alternative trade unions. On the contrary, the Leninist newspaper must be an innovative newspaper that avoids dogmatic formulations and maximalist formulas, and that bases political work on the specification of theory and on the study and analysis of objective processes and events, with the aim of defining the correct fundamental approach of political activity and of guiding accordingly the practice of the vanguard sectors. Ultimately, the yardstick of a revolutionary political newspaper is its capacity to raise the class consciousness of the most advanced elements of the proletariat of a given country, in order to build the party and develop political initiative. A newspaper that is not up to this task may perhaps fulfill the role of contributing to the development of economic and trade-union movements and struggles, but it will never be able to become anything more than the left wing of what already exists, that is, of movementist opportunism. It will never be able to function as the political organ of a revolutionary party that fights, from the outset, for the opening of a long-term process for the establishment of a New State.

The Leninist newspaper addresses the ideologically and culturally most advanced members of the proletariat, of the popular masses, and of the petty intelligentsia, providing these elements with everything they need on the ideological and intellectual level to oppose, at all level and on all fronts, the various bour-



geois and petty-bourgeois adversaries. From this point of view, the various political newspapers circulating in our country today appear quite similar to the economistic newspapers criticized by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*:

“One will search in our Social-Democratic press for lively and interesting articles, correspondence, and exposures dealing with our big and little affairs—diplomatic, military, ecclesiastical, municipal, financial, etc. There is almost nothing, or very little.” (What Is To Be Done?)

In the phase of party formation, besides having to fulfill the task of meeting the intellectual and political needs of the ideologically most advanced proletarian and petty-intellectual elements through an adequate struggle for the deviation of “spontaneity,” the newspaper must raise their theoretical-ideological level, in order to arrive at the formation of a sufficiently broad number of revolutionary cadres capable of fulfilling the task of building that party which must then become the driving force of the revolutionary process. A party which, for Lenin, must be clandestine.

Let us see what Lenin says about the relationship between the newspaper and the tasks connected with political initiative: “... *they study, study and turn themselves into conscious Social-Democrats [revolutionary Marxists, ed.], ‘the working-class intelligentsia’, and we must make every effort to ensure that its ranks are regularly expanded, that its lofty intellectual requirements are fully met, and that leaders of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party come from its ranks. The newspaper that*



wants to become the organ of all Russian Social -Democrats must therefore be at the level of the advanced workers; not only must it not lower its level artificially but, on the contrary, it must raise it constantly, following up all the tactical, political, and theoretical problems of world Social-Democracy. The average worker will not understand some of the articles in the newspaper, which should be the organ of the Party, he will not get a full grasp of an intricate theoretical or practical problem. This does not at all mean that the newspaper must lower itself to the level of the mass of its readers. The newspaper, on the contrary, must raise their level and help promote advanced workers from the middle stratum of workers.

If activity must be inspired by what is currently, and to the greatest degree accessible to the broadest masses, then we should preach anti-Semitism or to agitate, let us say, on the basis of an appeal to Father Johann of Kronstadt. This is likewise true of the political sphere: of course, only the developed worker will comprehend the general idea of the political struggle ... everywhere and at all times, the leaders of a given class are its most advanced, most educated representatives. Nor can it be otherwise in the Russian working-class movement. And to ignore the interests and requirements of this advanced section of the workers, to tend to descend to the level of understanding of the lower strata (instead of constantly raising the workers consciousness) must, therefore, necessarily have a profoundly harmful effect and prepare the



ground for the infiltration of all sorts of non-socialist and non-revolutionary ideas into the workers' midst...".
(Lenin, *A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats*)

Lenin argues that only by elevating the ideologically most advanced elements, in particular through the party newspaper, is it possible, through these same vanguard elements, to lead broader sections of the class in political struggle:

"In order to train strong political organizations, there is no means other than an all-Russia newspaper... the masses will never learn to conduct the political struggle until we help to train leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals. But such leaders can acquire training only if they get used to systematically evaluating all the everyday aspects of our political life, all attempts at protest and struggle on the part of the various classes and on various grounds." (What Is To Be Done?)

"The newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organizer. In this respect, it may be compared to the scaffolding erected round a building under construction, but it marks the contours of the structure, facilitates communication between the builders, permits them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organized labor." (What Is To Be Done?)

9.11.3. The Leninist newspaper and the party of cadres



Lenin calls for a theoretical-political newspaper, at least on a weekly basis, to serve the formation of a party understood as an organization of revolutionary cadres.

Lenin's conception of the party, the only one that can truly be defined as communist, is that the party must consist of a relatively small number of ideologically advanced elements, as many of whom as possible must be professional revolutionaries, that is, largely full-time political cadres.

With regard to this latter question, Lenin states:

“And I assert: 1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders maintaining continuity; 2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle, which forms the basis of the movement and participates in it, the more urgent the need for such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be (for it is much easier for all sorts of demagogues to side-track the more backward sections of the masses; 3) that such an organization must consist chiefly of people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; 4) that in an autocratic state, it will be all the more difficult to “unearth” such an organization the more we reduce its membership, admitting into it only people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police; and 5) the greater will be the number of workers and people from the other classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it.”



“This brings us to a highly important principle of all Party organization and all Party activity: ... with regard to the ideological and practical leadership of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, the greatest possible centralization is necessary... The movement must be led by the smallest possible number of the most homogeneous possible groups of professional revolutionaries with great practical experience. Participation in the movement should extend to the greatest possible number of the most diverse and heterogeneous groups of the most varied sections of the proletariat (and other classes of the people).” (A Letter to a comrade... quoted)

Lenin also states, with regard to the question of the relationship between the newspaper and the formation of the party of professional cadres:

“Any worker-agitator who is at all gifted and ‘promising’ should not be working eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party, that he may go underground when necessary and move to other cities. Otherwise, he will never gain much experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the struggle against the gendarmes. As the spontaneous rise of the labor movement becomes broader and deeper, the working-class masses promote from their ranks not only an increasing number of talented agitators, but also talented organizers, propagandists, and “practical workers” (practical in the best sense of the term, as there are so few among our intellectuals who are,



by nature, rather careless and sluggish). When we have forces of specially trained worker-revolutionaries, who have gone through extensive preparation (and, of course, revolutionaries “of all arms of the service”), no police force in the world will be able to liquidate them, for these forces, boundlessly devoted to the revolution, will also enjoy the boundless confidence of the widest masses of the workers. If we do too little to stimulate the workers to take this path of professional revolutionary training, common to them and to the “intellectuals,” if we drag them back all too often with our little speeches about what is “accessible” to the masses of the workers, to the “average workers,” we are directly to blame. (What Is To Be Done?, emphasis added).

In this passage, Lenin highlights the connection between the Marxist conception of the newspaper and the question of the party. For Lenin, the newspaper and its central function in the struggle against revisionist and economistic Marxism, and against other opportunist deviations, are inextricably linked to the struggle against the liquidationist, intellectualist, and legalistic conception of the revolutionary party.



10. THE THEORIES OF VARIOUS ITALIAN OPPORTUNIST GROUPS ON THE QUESTION OF PARTY FORMATION

10.1. The initiatives of certain opportunist groups on the question of the party

At the beginning of 2025, two initiatives focused on the question of building the Communist Party were held in Bologna and Rome. In both cases, they were promoted by several political forces which, despite significant underlying differences, identify themselves with “Marxism-Leninism.” The first was organized by the FGC/FC while the second revolved around Resistenza Popolare. About a year later, both initiatives had failed. The one promoted by the FGC/FC saw only the participation of a few local groups and produced no outcome throughout the entire year. In the second case, the four forces converging in the Prospettiva Unitaria project split, with the subsequent formation of the Partito Comunista di Unità Popolare, which does not appear to differ substantially from Resistenza Popolare itself. The question of building the communist party has also recently been raised by the syndicalist-Bordigist tendency (represented by Tendenza rivoluzionaria internazionalista -TIR- and the leadership group of SI-Cobas), without, however, taking any concrete form whatsoever. In November 2024, the Trotskyist-oriented PCR was constituted, deriving not from a party-building project, but simply from the decision of a previous Trotskyist organiza-



tion to constitute itself as a Party. Furthermore, a whole series of political groupings that have already adopted the designation ‘communist party’ present themselves as a center for the aggregation of forces that declare themselves to refer to communism. None of these appear to exhibit any particular expansion. Starting from the so-called ‘radical left’, we first find the Communist Refoundation Party led by Acerbo. On the far left, there are at least three parties that refer to Trotskyism. In addition to the aforementioned PCR, we also find the PCL of Ferrando and the Partito di Alternativa Comunista. Reference to “Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought” is instead made by the PMLI. Finally, there are two parties that claim adherence to “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”: the CARC-nPCI and Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia. The question of the formation of the communist party is today also raised and debated by other individual and collective actors operating within social movements, independent trade unionism, and parties such as Potere al Popolo (PAP). Overall, there are perhaps a few thousand sympathizers, militants, and cadres who either support the need for the “unification of the communists” or who assert that the Communist Party has already been constituted.

Nuova Egemonia does not share the ideology, programmes, strategy, or political line of these forces, and does not consider that they have built, or are capable of building, the communist party. Instead, it affirms the necessity of unity on the ideological basis of Maoism and puts forward the line of the struggle for hegemony for the formation of an initial embryonic form of the communist party.



10.2. Unification on the basis of “communist ethics”

The political and intellectual strata that claim that the communist party is formed by “uniting the communists” are acting in bad faith and seek to instrumentalize the genuine aspirations for a communist party expressed by many proletarians, members of the popular masses, young people, and petty intellectuals (students, technicians, lower-level office workers and teachers, care and service workers, etc.).

Many exploited workers, as well as many young people and students, do not understand why the forces that claim to pursue the goal of establishing a communist society are divided and in conflict with one another, and therefore aspire to a single “communist party.” These aspirations are obvious and stem from the fact that these comrades and proletarians perceive the weight of exploitation and political oppression and therefore aspire to socialist revolution and communism.

Young comrades and members of the proletariat and popular masses who lack political experience often fall into the trap of petty politicians who launch appeals for the “unity of the communists” because they have not yet directly confronted these problems and because they have not yet engaged with the work of studying Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and dialectical materialism. That is, because they have not yet truly committed themselves to the task aimed at the formation of an embryonic party and to the development of work aimed at the correct political



orientation of the advanced elements among the youth and the broad oppressed and exploited masses.

The real problem is not represented by the illusory ideas and aspirations of these comrades and proletarians, but by the old so-called “communist” political-intellectual stratum, which has gradually crystallized and dissolved into a thousand rivulets. From the pulpit of these privileged, sectarian, and factionalist politicians come almost all the sermons and cunning complaints against the “dogmatic” and “extremist” purveyors of splits. These arguments, which instrumentally exploit the most immediate and limited empirical experience and the spontaneous sentiments (and therefore scarcely elaborated from a critical point of view) of certain mass sectors, are intended to present their authors as the true supporters of the cause for building a communist party.

In this way, they also seek to gather support and militants not on the basis of an effective elaboration and application of revolutionary theory, but rather on that of a “communist ethics” nourished by seductive “empty signifiers,” that is, by superficial and generic appeals to the “values” of equality, social justice, socialism, and communism.



The ethical appeal is thus substituted for theory in an attempt to bring about the subjective conditions supposedly necessary for the “construction” of the communist party¹¹⁶.

This approach, which seeks to bypass the question of the choice, specification, and political-organizational implementation of the revolutionary theory of reference in favor of a manipulative ethics has proven entirely unsuccessful, as attested by at least fifty years of the more recent history of the far left in Italy.

This approach to the problem of party building produces, at best, sectarian bureaucratic-assemblyist aggregations, that is, movement organizations (and certainly not a Leninist organization of communist cadres) managed by a handful of bureaucrats who impose a sort of “division of labor” between political cadres and rank-and-file militants permanently assigned to “mass work.” Organizations of this type are easily formed today and at times even reach quantitatively significant dimensions, but at the same time they foster an underlying factionalism characterized, within the ruling political circle, by cross-vetoes and precarious bal-

¹¹⁶ To concretely understand what these sophisticated and careerist methods mean and how they function, one can consult the videos (easily available online) of the 25 January events on the party question, promoted by the FGC and the FC on the one hand and by the Prospettiva Unitaria grouping on the other, perhaps adding to these videos those of the founding conference of the Trotskyist PCR and Maurizio Acerbo’s speech at the recent congress of Rifondazione Comunista.



ances, which inevitably lead them first into an increasingly monotonous routine and then into a growing decline.

The use of a pseudo-communist and pseudo-revolutionary ethic, which relies on “values,” “ideals,” and “facts” designed to elicit easy consensus and generate superficial forms of identification, is something that can today be found in most parties and groups of the radical left and the far left. It is indeed found in all those cases in which a large part of the categories of the usual language of “communist groups” are defined and deployed in a generic and superficial, empirical and intellectualist manner, without any real relationship to the problem of the knowledge and transformation of actual reality. By way of example, these include categories such as “capitalism”, “imperialism”, “communism”, “party-form”, “trade union”, “class consciousness”, “economic struggle and political struggle”, “armed struggle”, “programme”, “strategy”, “communist party”, “unity of the communists”, “connection with the masses”, “armed revolution”, “socialism”, “internationalism”, “revolutionary theory”, “Marxism”, and “Marxism-Leninism”.

This lack of clear definitions is often a product not only of the intellectual amateurism so harshly and sarcastically criticized by Gramsci, but also of a consciously adopted and pursued choice. All this reflects not a materialist-dialectical philosophy structuring these parties and groups, but rather a pseudo-materialism that is empiricist and pragmatist, and often organically post-modern.



10.3. The formation of the party with the “unification of the communists”

The division between the forces that identify with communism is, first of all, an objective division, expressing the historical development of the International Communist Movement and, secondly, it is a problem related to the struggle between the black line and the red line on the question of the development and specification of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It follows that such division can be overcome not through the unification of revolutionary and reactionary positions, but through the struggle against revisionism and opportunism.

Just as in 1919 it became absolutely necessary to found a Communist International in order to draw a clear line of demarcation from the parties adhering to the Second International, which continued to define themselves as socialists, so in the immediately subsequent years it became necessary to place “Bolshevism” at the forefront as the basis for the construction of true communist parties.

In those years, the struggle on the international level against other tendencies (Trotskyists, councilists, Bordigists) was indeed a central issue. Although they referred to Marxism and communism, they had in fact become reactionary.

The term “Bolshevism” was synonymous with Marxism-Leninism and was, at the same time, the banner of the struggle against counter-revolutionary forces that disguised themselves as Marxist and communists, and in some cases even as Leninist. Stalin



therefore repeatedly stressed that one could be a true Marxist only if one was a Marxist-Leninist, and above all a Leninist.

Already during the Second World War and the international struggle against Nazi-fascism and for proletarian revolution, some parties that presented themselves as “communist” and “Marxist-Leninist” moved into the camp of revisionism (especially in the US, France, and, with the Salerno turn, in Italy). It was also for this reason that the Communist International was dissolved.

What is relevant for the issues addressed in this document is the fact that just a few years after the October Revolution, and even more so at the end of the Second World War, it had become impossible to speak of “communist parties” without examining their actual ideology and political line, unless, as has become fashionable today, one intended to rig the game in order to combat and oppose, in the name of communism, the construction of a genuine communist party.

At the end of World War II, various international tendencies that expressed counterrevolutionary ideological and political positions were referring to “communism”. With the coup d'état of the modern revisionists following Stalin's death, capitalism was restored in the USSR. In the meantime, however, Marxism-Leninism had developed on a world scale into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism under the impulse of the great Chinese Revolution and the construction of socialism in China. Maoism progressively synthesized, in the most organic way, the experience of the Third Communist International and of the struggle against Nazi-fas-



cism and imperialism. On this basis it initiated, developed, and completed the great Chinese Revolution, began the construction of socialism in China, and prepared the conditions for the historic Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution launched in 1966.

Maoism, therefore, by developing Marxism-Leninism through historical experiences of universal significance, was able to open and conduct the decisive struggle on the international level against modern revisionism. Maoism stressed that it is the class character of the political line that guides the Party, the Army, the State, and the economy that determines the socialist or capitalist character of a given country or group of countries.

After Stalin's death and the coup d'état that brought modern revisionists to power and imposed the restoration of capitalism, Maoism denounced the social-fascist and social-imperialist character of the former USSR and of many other parties that, on the international level, had shifted to the positions of modern revisionism.

However, all these parties continued to present themselves as "communist" and "Marxist-Leninist." It is evident that already by the early 1960s, reference not only to communism but also to "Marxism-Leninism" had become entirely insufficient and fundamentally erroneous. It was therefore a source of confusion and conciliation between reactionary and revolutionary positions, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

With the historic struggle on a world scale against modern revisionism, it was now possible to speak of "communist ideology"



and of the “communist party” only in relation to the development of Marxism-Leninism into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

In oppressed countries, those characterized by bureaucratic capitalism, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought paved the way for the necessary adoption of “Maoism.” This process culminated in the adoption by all these parties of the term “Maoism.” Chairman Gonzalo made a historically significant contribution to the achievement of this objective. In the imperialist countries, however, “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” almost immediately became, at least until the first half of the 1980s, a banner of neo-revisionism¹¹⁷. Only in the first half of the 1980s did the struggle for the affirmation of Maoism begin to gain ground in the various imperialist countries, thanks to the impetus given to this struggle by the Communist Party of Peru.

The opportunist positions of the “Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought” groups of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s facilitated the rise of the New Left. In Italy, while Marxist-Leninist groups remained trapped in the revisionism represented by a series of micro-splits from the left wing of the PCI, on the opposite

¹¹⁷ In Italy, “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” began to take root in the 1960s, in particular with the formation of the Pcd’I(m-l)-Nuova Unità and the UCI(m-l)-Servire il popolo (which in 1972 adopted the name PC(M-L)I-La Voce Operaia). The groups promoting these two organizations, in the first case, came predominantly from various micro-splits within the PCI, and from Trotskyist groups in the second. Togliattism and Trotskyism heavily influenced the leaderships of these two organizations. In 1968, the Pcd’I(m-l) began to split up, while the PC(M-L)I dissolved after a series of splits (among which the main one was that leading to the formation of Operai e Teoria, later Operai Contro) into Autonomia Operaia.



side there developed the so-called New Left, emerging both from the left wings of the Italian PSI, the DC, and partly the PCI itself, and from the tendencies of “anti-Stalinism,” that is, from those of so-called “left-wing communism” (councilism, Bordighism, Trotskyism).

Well positioned within the academic and broader intellectual world – particularly in the artistic, philosophical, literary, cinematic, and other fields – the New Left was essentially hegemonic within the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Within the framework of the New Left, around the turn of the 1960s, theoretical workerism emerged with Raniero Panzieri and the experience of *Quaderni Rossi*.¹¹⁸

The PCI of the 1960s and 1970s radically opposed, before anything else, the creation of the subjective conditions for revolution, directing its efforts towards the containment and passivization of potentially revolutionary struggles and movements, and working extensively, to this end, within the State. All this re-

¹¹⁸ Well established within the left wing of the trade-union movement, theoretical workerism subsequently developed with Tronti and Negri of Potere Operaio, and later through the successive phases of Potere Operaio and of the Autonomia Operaia movement. Workerism was also substantially present in Lotta Continua, as well as in its later and more radical developments and articulations (Lotta Continua per il comunismo, Prima Linea, the Walter Alasia Brigade, etc.). Avanguardia Operaia (later Democrazia Proletaria) also drew on workerism, constituting a sort of fusion of “left-wing social democracy,” “Trotskyism,” and workerism. Workerism also had a significant influence on the Red Brigades themselves.



flected its ties to the State and to State Monopoly Capital. The left wing of the PCI, such as the faction that would later rally around Cossutta, was no less involved; on the contrary, it often proved even more politically dangerous due to its well-known proximity to state apparatuses and the effectiveness of its plan aimed at hindering the tendency towards proletarian revolution. The cadres of the left wing of the PCI, trained and 'educated' by this experience, always had a dual nature: outwardly antifascist and progressive, but in substance reactionary and social-fascist. These are the cadres that gave rise to experiences such as the PdUP-Manifesto, that supported the trade-union left in the 1970s, that generated the Cossutta faction, and that overall contributed decisively to the formation of the PdCI and the PRC. In the latter case, this occurred with the contribution of Democrazia Proletaria, the Trotskyists (who, following the disintegration of the PRC, later constituted the PCL and today the PCR), and other minor opportunist groups.

When the fragmentation said to exist among the communist forces is criticized today, and the banner of the unity of the communists is raised, the term "communists" is also used to refer to the remnants of anti-democratic and anti-proletarian forces such as the PCI of Berlinguer, Natta, and Ingrao, as well as the later Cossutta's PdCI and Bertinotti's PRC. Today, there are various "communist" forces that have their roots in this mire. There range from those that create confusion in an attempt to mix Togliattism with Trotskyism and maximalism (such as, for example, the FGC and FC) to those that instead advocate a "left" populism that is increasingly shifting to the right (Rete dei Comunisti,



PAP, Acerbo's PRC, Alboresi's PCI, Forum dei Comunisti, etc.) or a red-brown movement (Prospettiva Unitaria - Partito Comunista di Unità Popolare).

To advance on the path towards the formation of an actual communist party, it is therefore necessary to reject the theory that a party is built by 'uniting the communists' and instead affirm the need to clearly define and distinguish the various historical tendencies that claim adherence to communism.

10.4. Togliatti's theory of the mass party and the party-movement

The theory of the "mass party" was put forward by Togliatti's leadership during the Salerno Turn¹¹⁹ and was then immediately applied to the PCI, contributing to its organic transformation in a revisionist direction. The current theory and practice of the "party-movement" are closely related to Togliatti's conception of the party.

Togliatti argued that the party should not at all be a party of revolutionary cadres, but rather a broad mass organization com-

¹¹⁹ For a detailed critique of the PCI's revisionist turn known as the 'Salerno Turn' and of the many (PRC, PCI, Prospettiva Unitaria, CARC-nPCI, FGC-FC, Piattaforma Comunista, etc.) who still defend it today and thus claim to reproduce its logic, see the text written by Nuova Egemonia available at the following link: <https://nuovaegemonia.com/wpcontent/uploads/2024/12/vs-piattaforma-comunista.pdf>



posed not only of cadres, but also of supporters and sympathizers. This is a revisionist theory.

A truly communist party places at the core of its existence (and therefore also at the core of the life of each militant) the work of preparing for and initiating the proletarian revolution and for the affirmation of socialism and communism. This implies that the party and all its militants must attach particular importance to the study and application, in the specific conditions of each country, of Marxism-Leninism (today Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) and the philosophy of dialectical materialism.

The theory of the communist party, as emphasized by Antonio Gramsci, was first developed by Lenin. Maoism further developed the Leninist theory of the party in qualitative terms. Togliatti's theory of the "mass communist party", by contrast, holds that as many people as possible should be allowed to join the communist party. This includes all those who declare themselves sympathetic to the party and who support it through work in the various mass organizations promoted by the party itself (e.g. associations, unions, committees, coordinating bodies, factory councils, community centers, people's houses, etc.).

The theory of the "mass party" is the Italian modern revisionist variant of the liberal conception of the party. This theory is the Trojan horse of bourgeois ideology, revisionism, liberalism, bureaucracy, corruption, patriarchy, chauvinism, infiltration, and provocation. The communist party has nothing in common with a liberal or revisionist type of party.



Current revisionist and opportunist theories on the question of the “Party-Form” seek to subsume under the same category of “party” both bourgeois parties (reactionary, revisionist, and opportunist) and the party of the proletariat. Contrary to popular belief, these are not “different forms” of the same “party-form”; rather, they are entirely distinct entities, fundamentally incomparable, sharing only the most superficial designation, namely the term “party.”

The “party-movement” is merely a radical-liberal and postmodern variant of the Togliattian mass party model. A variant that today is commonly adopted as a criterion and model by various small parties and organizations that claim to be communist parties or aim at building one. The “party-movement” consists in the idea that the party is formed through the gathering and unification, within a single political organization seeking national presence and activity, of individuals and bodies that, in one way or another, believe it is possible to combine struggles for immediate demands and the fight against government policies with supposed “values” and ‘ideals’ of an international and communist nature¹²⁰.

¹²⁰ A concrete example of this liberal conception of organization is the Fronte della Gioventù Comunista (FGC), which was founded precisely as a “movement,” as a collection of heterogeneous student mass organizations held together by common demands and by the common political stance represented by Rizzo’s PC. The FGC has never been a party-type organization of communist militants/cadres, nor can it ever become one, given its origins and its reformist and movementist conceptions. Another example is that of the Rete dei Comunisti.



The party-movement thus constitutes, in general, a sort of heterogeneous front of mass organizations, held together by a movementist relationship to certain spheres of initiative and by weak and as vague as possible theoretical, ideological, and programmatic references (in order to “prevent the front from quickly disintegrating”). What therefore characterizes the party-movement is a classic programme of struggle which, in itself, falls within economism and reformism¹²¹. It therefore lacks a revolutionary party programme.

In summary, the elements involved in the question of the conception and practice of the communist party understood as a “party-movement” are:

1) Maximalism, i.e. an abstract reference (without any active relationship to the strategy, programme, and political line actually proposed and implemented), possibly also of an “ethical” kind (values and ideals), to the revolution and to the maximum programme of socialism and communism;

¹²¹ In general, a party-movement centred on the practice of a programme opposing the interests of the employers and government policies may also envisage and undertake radical forms of struggle and thus potentially lead to a sort of “armed movementism” (one might think of the *Autonomia Operaia* movement of the 1970s). Or it may simply combine a programme for immediate demands with an abstract formulation and propaganda of the maximum programme relating to socialist revolution and proletarian internationalism.



- 2) A deliberately vague and superficial reference to Marxism or Marxism-Leninism;
- 3) The idea of accumulating forces and building the party through the unification of individual and collective subjects that are found in struggles and movements;
- 4) The conception of strategy as the undertaking of a series of forms of organization and of struggle (an approach that leads to the paradoxical conclusion that there are as many versions of 'party-movement' as there are different forms of struggle considered necessary to prioritize, today or in the future);
- 5) The thesis of the programme of struggle as the basis for promoting and radicalizing struggles and the subsequent rejection of the minimum programme of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution as the beginning of the uninterrupted revolution towards socialism (maximum programme).

In practice, each of these elements takes on different forms, giving rise to countless variations of the conception and practice of the 'party-movement', which lead to the existence of a wide range of movementist organizations and small parties. What follows is that we have a wide variety of organized political realities, often very distant from one another, which adopt the model of the party-movement.



10.5. The idea of the communist party born out of struggles

This conception has been put forward particularly by forces drawing on theoretical workerism¹²² or, more generally, on the Autonomia Operaia movement. However, there are also other forces that attempt to combine the older theories of workerism and Autonomia Operaia with Marxism-Leninism, “councilism”¹²³, with Trotskyism and Bordigism, and finally with Marxism-Leninism and “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” and which argue that the communist party can only be formed if the economic struggle of the proletariat¹²⁴ and the founding of a rank-and-file union are placed at the center of party practice.

¹²² Here we can adopt a broad understanding of “theoretical workerism” as distinct from the later phase of Autonomia; in this sense, theoretical workerism ranges from Raniero Panzieri’s *Quaderni Rossi*, to Tronti’s *Operai e Capitale* and the early work of Negri, up to Potere Operaio and the *33 lezioni su Lenin*.

¹²³ For example, the ideas developed by Rosa Luxemburg (see *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*, first published in 1919. This text begins with the essay *The Russian Revolution, Anarchism and the General Strike*, which refers to the 1905 revolution). In *Prison Notebook* No. 13, paragraph 24, Gramsci will characterize Rosa Luxemburg’s councilism in relation to 1905 as “spontaneist and economistic.” In today’s diverse world of the far left, the version of councilism that has had the most following is that proposed by Paul Mattick (1904-1981). This form of “councilism” is distinguished by a mechanistic approach to the “critique of political economy” and, consequently, by its specific revisionist theory of collapse.

¹²⁴ These include forces such as: -TIR, the leadership group of SI Cobas, and the Laboratorio Politico Iskra (which combine Bordigism with councilism and syndicalism); -“Rete dei Comunisti” and the leadership of USB (which



This approach to the question of the work required for party-building considers the main task of communist activity today to be that of promoting struggles and winning over the “most combative” advanced elements that are presumed to emerge spontaneously from the movements.

This conception of the party as something that “is born out of struggles” stands in opposition to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, according to which the first nucleus of the Party is formed primarily through the unification of communists on the basis of a revolutionary ideology that has been properly specified and made relevant to present conditions and, secondly, through propaganda and activities centered on the minimum revolutionary political programme (the program of the Anti-fascist People’s Democratic Revolution).

The thesis that the party “is born out of struggles” implicitly contains the idea that what determines the process of forming the first embryo of the communist party is the communists’ direct, “physical” involvement in trade-union struggles, opposition movements, and various associations and mass organizations

combine “theoretical workerism,” “left-wing social democracy,” and “Marxism-Leninism”); -the small Trotskyist parties, usually well positioned within the ranks of the labor aristocracy linked to the trade-union left of CGIL and CISL; - “Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia” together with its tiny “Slai Cobas per il sindacato di classe di Taranto,” which has long pursued the hegemonic project dreamed of by PC(M-L)I La Voce Operaia in the early 1970s of merging the positions of Autonomia Operaia with “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.”



and coordinating bodies. Communists who aim to build the party should therefore themselves become, above all, the vanguard elements of the spontaneous mobilizations led by workers and students, by working-class neighborhood organizations, and by the “organizations of the popular masses”¹²⁵.

According to this thesis, only a party formed by uniting the combative proletariat and youth emerging in the course of struggles with the communist militants who stand on the front line of the “class struggle as it concretely unfolds,” would constitute a true class party, a true communist party.

To properly understand and frame the thesis of the “party that is born out of struggles,” it is necessary to critically summarize it on the theoretical level. In essence, this theory maintains that the communist party is formed by merging two distinct dimensions, that of “subjectivity” and that of “objectivity.” On the one hand, there is the initiative of communist subjectivity; on the other, the product of spontaneity expressed through movements and strug-

¹²⁵ The consequence of this thesis is that, unless it is directly aimed at the “concrete promotion of mobilizations and struggles,” it would even be counterproductive to pursue tasks related to: 1) theoretical work aimed at specifying revolutionary theory within one’s own “national reality”; 2) the propaganda of this specified revolutionary theory; 3) ideological and political differentiation from the other “communist” tendencies and groups of the present and the past; 4) the ideological training of the most revolutionary elements; 5) the construction of the hegemony required for the ideological and organizational unification of the most revolutionary elements into an embryonic form of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party operating on a nationwide scale.



gles, within which mass vanguards would supposedly emerge¹²⁶. The formation of the communist party would be the outcome of the fusion between communist subjectivity and the expression of the objective movement continuously generated by the masses¹²⁷. This view of the party rejects the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist conception, according to which its formation is instead the expression of a single dimension: that of subjectivity and of its specific initiative in building the party.

¹²⁶Let us consider, for example, how Raniero Panzieri, founder of theoretical workerism, attempts to appropriate Leninism (in a revisionist, economic, and movementist sense) in order to distort it and therefore, regarding the relationship between the dimension of subjectivity and that of objectivity, argues: “*I would say that the method of inquiry... demands the refusal to draw an analysis of the level of the working class from an inquiry into the level of capital. It means, in essence, that we wish to restate Lenin’s proposition that the political workers’ movement is an encounter between socialism and the spontaneous movement of the working class. That is, within the spontaneous movement of the working class...*” (Raniero Panzieri, *Uso socialista dell’inchiesta*, 1965.) Panzieri himself clearly articulated this point of view at the conference held in Turin in June 1964 between the workerists and the Trotskyists (attended by Panzieri and Vittorio Rieser on behalf of *Quaderni rossi*, and Maitan and Renzo Gambino on behalf of *Bandiera Rossa*): “*The objective conditions for a revolutionary party of the working class do not exist; therefore, only preparatory work is possible*” (<https://www.machina-deriveapprodi.com/post/panzieri-e-le-minoranze-comuniste-del-suo-tempo>).

¹²⁷ It therefore supports, on a philosophical level, the revisionist theory of the “fusion of two into one,” of the “unity” and “reconciliation” of opposites.



10.6. The theory of direct or indirect participation in elections as an aspect of the party formation process

For almost a century now, communist parties have no longer been present in the so-called bourgeois representative institutions and assemblies of the imperialist countries. The last significant experience dates back to France in the 1930s. From the end of the Second World War onwards, the so-called communist parties that ran in elections in the imperialist countries were in reality revisionist parties, working to bring to an end the pacification of the anti-fascist resistance and of the struggles of the proletariat and the peasantry. Since the end of the Second World War to the present day, the parliamentary and representative institutions of the imperialist states have increasingly taken on a “bureaucratic-corporatist” character and have therefore become ever more reactionary and fascistic. In these countries, the proportional representation system itself has either never been applied or has long since ceased to function. Thus, even the last formal pillar of the liberal bourgeois-democratic state is absent. In its place are systems and laws that reward the strongest governing parties, along with high electoral thresholds for smaller parties. In such institutions, decisions are never actually taken within the so-called representative assemblies (parliament, senate, regional, provincial, and municipal councils) on the basis of political confrontation among the various parties, which are in any case expected to operate on the basis of the general principles of bourgeois democracy and in the light of essentially stable and



clearly defined programs. Nor does any institutional arena exist in which political forces emerging from the electoral outcomes can (assuming they want to) openly engage with one another in order to legislate. Instead of debate on fundamental issues, there are technocratic procedures that introduce decisive distortions in favor of the executive (whether at the national, regional, or other levels). The ruling parties themselves have no clearly defined programmes and therefore do not in any way express specific class interests. Rather, they are servants of the ruling bloc, continually shifting their positions and programmes in order to manipulate and manage the popular masses in terms of reactionary hegemony, contributing to their subjugation and working to legitimize and reinforce repression by the state's political and military apparatuses. Finally, increasingly more often, each individual law adopted at the national level takes the form of a deliberate hieroglyph that affects, case by case, the most disparate fields and is supported by data, statistics, and mathematical models that are not verifiable at all and that often amount to nothing more than the formalized, seemingly neutral and objective expression of reactionary bourgeois theories. On a general level, moreover, at the national government level, executives increasingly assume undisputed dominance through the mechanism of votes of confidence. Finally, a highly significant factor is that the decisions implemented by government executives emerge from committees and bodies where a leading role is played by various "experts" (international relations, finance, administration, economic policies, social policies, the armed forces and public order, universities and research centers, etc.). In reality, this corrupt and reactionary technocratic-intellectual stratum



mediates the relationship between the ruling class and the political class (made up of the various parties of power operating within ‘assemblies’ and representative institutions) providing the former with yet another lever with which to direct the latter. Gramsci had already pointed out how a form of corporatist and semi-fascist State is achieved through ‘experts’. In this technocratic-corporatist and semi-fascist State, the various parties that seem to emerge from election results differ only on the question of the most effective methods by which, on the level of exercising reactionary hegemony over the popular masses, they fulfill the tasks related to the function of government. This contemporary characteristic of the political forces in power translates into the fact that they lack a defined and stable programmatic framework. Empirical evidence is found in the fact that, during every election campaign or when in opposition, the various ruling forces declare programmatic points that are subsequently drastically modified or abandoned altogether. The representative institutions of the various imperialist bourgeois states are overtly anti-liberal, they are the opposite of the old bourgeois democracy, and today they appear decrepit, characterized by an irreversible crisis of hegemony. Operating within them are only ultra-reactionary and fascist-populist liberal forces, or social-fascist and opportunist forces. Today, this crisis drives a dynamic that is pushing the process of fascistization and corporatization to an ever-higher degree, with the result that the political axis of the ultra-reactionary liberal and social-fascist forces is shifting further and further to the right, rewarding the most openly fascist-populist and Nazi forces.



Advocating for either direct participation (by promoting so-called alternative electoral lists) or indirect participation (such as endorsing a specific list or candidate) in such institutions amounts to passing them off as liberal and bourgeois-democratic; it means confusing and deceiving the masses, ultimately working to favor fascism. The forces of the radical left and the far left that present the electoral path as a necessary path for building the party (in Italy, PAP, PCR, PCI, Sinistra Anticapitalista, Prospettiva Unitaria, Rete dei Comunisti) or that otherwise urge voting for “left-wing” parties during elections (like CARC-nPCI and, in a sly and “entryist” manner, the Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia group itself, which on the one hand claims to be abstentionist yet seeks to link itself to PAP and to become part of it wherever it is present) are falsely communist. They directly support or promote the formation of a privileged bureaucratic political-intellectual class, which works hand-in-hand with academia, with cultural and social associations, cooperatives, non-profits, NGOs, confederal and independent trade unions, and various other organs of reactionary civil society. This class seeks to reproduce and expand itself by corrupting and co-opting students and precarious teachers, social care workers, grassroots activists from movements and community centers, union cadres, workers of the labor aristocracy, the lumpenproletariat, etc. All this is achieved through: the granting of small privileges and economic advantages; the handing out of responsibilities and prominent roles within the political organization; guarantees of legal defense in union, civil, and criminal matters via dedicated lawyers and law firms; more or less precarious “job opportunities” inside the party apparatus or inside state-funded associa-



tions such as specific social centers, friendly cooperative enterprises, trade union organizations (both confederated and independent), etc.

10.7. The theory of the 'trade union party'

There are two variants of the conception of the 'trade union party':

- 1) The first argues that one must start by building a class-conscious trade union and then move on to form a political party,
- 2) The second maintains that a union should be built to simultaneously carry out the functions of a party.

In the first case, it is asserted that it is necessary to give a social class base to the process of party formation and that, for this purpose, a significant presence is needed in confederated and/or independent unions, or else to promote and unify economic organizations of a union and day-to-day nature. A recurring thesis tied to this type of conception is that, thanks to the direct experience of the economic struggle, it would be possible to subjectivize significant sectors of the proletariat in a revolutionary and communist way, thus widening the subjective basis for the formation of the party.

In the second case, the very necessity of forming a communist party is outright denied. What we have here, therefore, is a purely "councilist" vision.



The ideological substance of these variants of the party-union conception is reformism and economism which, if necessary, can easily coexist with maximalism.

In Italy, forces of a Bordigist-syndicalist orientation (such as TIR, SI Cobas, Iskra¹²⁸), along with left-populist and semi-workerist forces (such as the Rete dei Comunisti and the leadership of USB, etc.), support the theses of the first variant. They are joined by the Slai Cobas per il sindacato di classe of Proletari Comunisti and Slai Prol Cobas. Although the honeymoon between FCG/FC and TIR and SI Cobas has ended, elements of this type of economist vision remain within the theses of the FCG¹²⁹. Some independent unions, such as the now near-extinct Slai Cobas Nazionale, support the second variant.

¹²⁸ See, for example, the following statement: “*Today, the constitution into a party of the class vanguards can only happen by reuniting forces that are currently divided and non-homogeneous. We must continue to work towards the broadest unity of the workers’ and trade union movement as an indispensable factor for advancing the organization of the class vanguards into a party.*” (Iskra, *organizzazione-partito-processo-rivoluzionario.pdf*, p. 6).

¹²⁹ See the following thesis: “*If historically trade unions emerged first, followed only later by workers’ parties, it is clear that today the two perspectives must stride dialectically together (La questione comunista oggi, 30 anni dopo Rifondazione, Paolo Spenta, FGC national secretariat, in Senza Tregua on February 21, 2021).*”



10.8. The thesis of the party-front that is constituted according to the form of the revolution

This thesis rejects the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist principle that the question of the “form of the revolution” stems from the objective nature of the characteristics of the revolution, which must be considered as related to three levels: 1) the universal level of the proletarian revolution in the epoch of imperialism’s dying phase, of the tendency towards revolution as the main trend, and of the reactionary offensive of the bourgeoisie and imperialism; 2) the particular level relating to the distinction between Directly Socialist Revolutions in the main imperialist countries, Anti-fascist People’s Democratic Revolutions in marginal imperialist countries, and New Democratic Revolutions in bureaucrat-capitalist countries; 3) the specific degree to which each country’s characteristics relate to historical milestones (or Questions in Gramsci’s sense); the specific characteristics must be examined from a structural and historical standpoint and must therefore evaluate and absorb the essential lessons from the history of class struggle within that specific country.

The question of the universal, the particular, and the specific characteristics of the proletarian revolution is first of all a matter of “content.” Secondly, it also concerns the aspect of “form,” insofar as the latter must derive objectively from the “content” itself. While the aspect of content concerns the characteristics of the general strategy of the revolution, the aspect of form explicitly maps out and organically develops the politico-military strategy. In this sense, the question of the form of the revolution



is a clarification of what constitutes its content and, as such, it is also the most concrete manifestation of that content.

In the context of any specific country, only after correctly defining the content and, therefore, the appropriate form of the proletarian revolution can it be argued that the problem has been formulated adequately to support the formation of the party's first embryo.

The question of protracted people's war is objectively inherent in the general strategy of the people's democratic and anti-fascist revolution for a People's Democratic State framed within the uninterrupted revolution towards socialism. In this sense, the military theory of the proletariat, as applied to national reality defines the nature of the form of the proletarian revolution in Italy.

The theory of the party-strategy that should be formed around the "form of the revolution" rejects Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and leads to the creation of a Party-front that separates the problem of content from that of form.

The outcome of this split is the mystical reversal of the relationship between content and form. Consequently, an intellectualistic and subjectivistic view of the question of "political-military strategy" is proposed as a potentially unifying center for the construction of the party.

In Italy, the experience with the Red Brigades on the one hand, and with the workerist positions on the "military radicalization of the economic and reformist struggle" (Autonomia Operaia) on the other, alongside the focoist and semi-Trotskyist guerrilla



movements of the 1960s in other parts around the world (particularly Latin America), have shown that eclectic political formations are built on this basis, producing Movement-parties or Front-parties that are fundamentally incapable of leading the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and the exploited oppressed strata of the petty bourgeoisie.

10.9. The Bordigist theory of convergence with the communist programme

This theory is essentially rooted in the most classical forms of Bordigism (although this theory is not foreign to forms of a Trotskyist orientation and other intellectualist and culturalist approaches). In essence, it argues that the party would constitute itself only when the spontaneous movement of the proletariat, driven by a catastrophic crisis or an imperialist war developing on a world scale, becomes ready to embrace the maximum program. To make this encounter possible, a propaganda center must therefore be established which is capable of rallying the forces of the proletariat around the clarification and popularization of the maximum program of socialist revolution, socialism, and communism. The party would thus emerge in two phases: first, through the unification of cadres who are conscious of the necessity of the socialist revolution and are committed to its propaganda among the masses; second, through the encounter of these cadres with a spontaneous mass movement which, under the weight of the revolutionary crisis, tends to move inde-



pends from the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political and trade-union formations.

The Bordigist conception of the party is therefore an expression of:

- 1) an abstract and intellectualistic conception of revolutionary theory and the revolutionary programme;
- 2) a rejection of the Marxist theory according to which the essential task lies in the particularization and specification of revolutionary theory with respect to one's own national reality;
- 3) a mechanistic and erroneous conception of capitalism and imperialism (catastrophist – e.g., the theory of crisis-collapse or of the imperialist war as the outcome of the falling rate of profit), to which workings the development of the “revolutionary crisis” is entrusted;
- 4) a spontaneous and movementist approach that denies the centrality of the struggle for proletarian hegemony and ultimately views party formation as the result of the convergence between the subjectivity of the cadres backing the communist programme and the objective development of “class autonomy.”

The Bordigist theory formulates a subjectivist, ultra-left programme for the proletarian revolution, asserting the need for the immediate suppression of private property of the means of production in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie, and denying the centrality of the proletariat's struggle for hegemony and thus for setting up a system of alliances with the exploited and oppressed petty-bourgeois masses. Ultimately, it is a reactionary theory



that leads to the formation of political organizations opposed to the building of an actual communist party.

10.10. The conception of the party that is formed on the basis of a “New Synthesis”

10.10.1. The origin of the theory of the necessity for a “New Synthesis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism”

The theory of the necessity for a “New Synthesis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” emerged in various countries¹³⁰ during the late 1960s. It was in opposition to this trend that the correct Maoist approach forced its way forward on a world scale during that decade: from India to the Philippines, from Turkey to Perú. This approach was pursued especially by Chairman Gonzalo, who led the struggle for the affirmation of Maoism on a global scale. The

¹³⁰ In addition to France, where a long tradition of eclectically combining post-modernism (starting from the Althusserian left) and “Maoism” exists and, as we shall see more clearly, in Italy, this is particularly the case in the US with Avakian’s RCP(USA). The RCP(USA) explicitly champions the theory of party-building through the “New Synthesis.” According to Avakian, the leader of that party, the experience of the ICM should be subjected to a “scientific assessment” in order to pinpoint the reasons why it has been unable, given what occurred in Russia shortly after Stalin’s death or in China itself, to maintain and develop the socialist camp. Avakian claims that, under his leadership, the RCP(USA) has produced a New Synthesis capable, in his opinion, of overcoming the alleged limitations and inconsistencies of the ICM.



history of the international Maoist movement highlights the development of this struggle, first during the founding, evolution, and dissolution of the RIM, and later with the historic foundation of the International Communist League. In Italy, the theory of the New Synthesis emerged at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s in a specific form, intertwined with the experience of the Red Brigades and the founding of the PC(M-L)I-La Voce Operaia. By the 1980s, two tendencies made their way on this basis, which would eventually crystallize into the CARC-nPCI and Rossoperaio-Proletari Comunisti-Pcm.

Both and in Italy and internationally, these attempts share a common core: a distorted view of dialectical materialism. However, the consequences of the attempts to produce a “New Synthesis” have also taken on a general character, affecting the economic and political theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as well. The substance of these attempts is represented by eclecticism – the reconciliation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism with foreign theories that are opposed to the scientific ideology of the proletariat. The ultimate result of this eclecticism is the liquidation of proletarian ideology, despite the fact that the formal and instrumental reference to Maoism remains essentially intact. In this sense, one can also speak of neo-revisionism.

The question of the New Synthesis, both internationally and in Italy, concerns the incorporation into the theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism of the historical tendencies of “left-wing communism” (councilism, Trotskyism, and, in the Italian case, Bordigism) and those of the New Left of the 1960s (left social democracy, left-wing Althusserianism, Frankfurt School theory,



Latin American Marxism-Leninism, Castroist, Trotskyist, and populist guerrilla movements, and, particularly in Italy, workerism). It may be argued today that in Italy, during the phase of party formation, the main contradiction to be resolved is that between Maoism and the “New Synthesis.” From this perspective, the chief obstacle to the formation of the communist party in Italy is represented by the “New Synthesis” formulated by G. Maj and set out in the *Manifesto Programma* of the nPCI, together with the positions of the Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia group.

10.10.2. Class struggle and the theory of the New Synthesis

Although neither CARC-nPCI nor Proletari Comunisti-PCm has ever explicitly adopted the term “New Synthesis”, they both have built their political framework and identity around the notion that it is necessary to begin from the development of a “New Synthesis” of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

Both Carc-nPCI and Proletari Comunisti PCm argue that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism develops and acquires greater specificity through the practice of class struggle. The problem, however, lies in their understanding of the “practice of class struggle” and its relationship to the question of revolutionary theory. Their view differs greatly from that of dialectical materialism. The concept of “class struggle practice” is, by itself, quite vague and indeterminate when the issue at hand is to explain precisely how Marxism-Leninism-Maoism develops. Lenin, for instance, did not merely speak of the “practice of class struggle”, but pointed out with precision that the three sources from which Marxism



arose were political economy, classical German philosophy, and socialism that had not yet become scientific.

Therefore, according to Lenin, Marxism is not a synthesis of the proletariat's experience of class struggle during the late 18th and the first decades of the 19th centuries. Leninism, as the second stage of revolutionary theory, emerged – at the level of economic, political, and philosophical theory – from the specification of Marxism in relation to Russian reality, as well as from the struggle against revisionist and economistic Marxism in the battle to build the party. It subsequently developed through the struggle against Menshevism over the question of defining the strategy of the proletarian revolution in Russia. This struggle also marked a profound break with the Marxism of the Second International. Leninism developed organically in the construction of the party within the framework of the revolutionary process that led to the victorious October Revolution, the first steps in the establishment of socialism in Russia, and the formation of the USSR and the Third Communist International.

Can Leninism be regarded merely as a synthesis of the experience of the Russian Revolution, as many revisionists claim? To frame the question in these terms would mean overlooking the fact: 1) that the October Revolution revealed a universal character and validity, and therefore was not just one revolution among many; 2) that Leninism constituted a scientific synthesis of the entire experience of the international Marxist movement, and it was only on this basis that the Third International could emerge in the struggle against the revisionist and social-imperialist Sec-



ond International; 3) that Leninism marked a development of Marxism on all levels (politics, economics, and philosophy), and not solely in regard to the experience and theory of the proletarian revolution.

The opening chapters of this Manifesto likewise describe the origins and development of Maoism in similar terms.

It follows that speaking of the “practice of class struggle” as the basis for the development of the theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism means little and creates confusion unless a distinction is made between the revolutionary practice of objective and universal significance developed by a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party, and any practice of class struggle whatsoever, carried out by any organization, whether more or less revolutionary. In Marx’s time, for example, the political initiative of utopian and semi-anarchist communist tendencies, or, more recently, that of the New Left, Workerism, and the Combatant Groups of the 1960s and 1970s, also fell, in a generic sense, within the “practice of class struggle.” It is no coincidence that the proponents of the New Synthesis theory avoid adequately examining the question of revolutionary practice and its relationship to the development of the theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Only by refraining from defining this relationship at the theoretical and philosophical level can they attempt to subsume under the concept of “practice” even the “practice of class struggle” of revolutionary tendencies that are alien and opposed to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. This confusion obviously has but one purpose: to eclectically



“incorporate” into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism “revolutionary experiences and theories” such as those of the Red Brigades or those of workerism and Autonomia Operaia. Ultimately, the theory of the New Synthesis proposes, as the logic and method for the development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the incorporation of revolutionary experiences, conceptions, and positions deriving from entirely different theoretical frameworks and conceptions. With regard to the historical question of the formation of Leninism through the struggle against opportunism, it is useful to recall the experience and orientation of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party which, from the beginning of the 20th century until its complete disintegration – culminating in its alignment with the bourgeoisie and the White armies of the anti-Bolshevik counterrevolution – advocated the incorporation of the populist tendency into Marxism.

10.10.3. The sophistic deception of “starting from concrete problems”

The advocates of the necessity of a New Synthesis do not proceed from the application of the theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to the study and analysis of the experience of the MCI, the Third International, the PCI under the leadership of Gramsci, and the contributions of Maoism and Chairman Gonzalo, but from an abstract and intellectualistic formulation of a series of pseudo-problems, presented in an emotionally persuasive way as if their relevance and significance were self-evident and beyond dispute.



The pseudo-problems generally raised by those forces in Italy that have advocated a “New Synthesis” are of the following kind:

1) “Why has the proletarian revolution, up to the present day, failed to achieve victory in Italy or in any imperialist country?”

(CARC-nPCI)

3) “Why can’t the revolution advance in those countries that are expected to follow the path of New Democratic Revolution?”

(Proletari Comunisti-PCm)

Questions of this kind, while appearing to be ‘concrete’, are in reality completely abstract. The answer to these supposed questions can only be a systematic reconstruction of a specific situation and phase of the class struggle. Once the real process has been consciously and scientifically reproduced on a theoretical level, the initial questions dissolve and reveal themselves to be devoid of any rational meaning.

This approach, which starts from “pseudo-problems,” is typical of postmodernist philosophy. Irrational “questions” are formulated, but they are compatible with appearances and with the limited ideological preparation of the militants. Then, an attempt is made to seduce and fascinate the reader by drawing them into an increasingly intricate labyrinth characterized by changes and twists and turns, while being constantly presented with the prospect of eventually arriving at a solution to the enigma. Meanwhile, during this journey through the labyrinth, militants and sympathizers are “vaccinated” against the influence of a series of positions and conceptions presented as “dogmatic.” This is done, moreover, without ever – in a Heideggerian sense – these



“dogmatic” conceptions being openly and directly addressed on a theoretical level. In the end, the enigma is resolved in a certain sense, but how?

By arguing, for example, that Revolution in the imperialist countries has failed because the New Synthesis was missing or, in other words, that the ICM at the stage of Marxism-Leninism was limited and contained erroneous conceptions that were only subsequently remedied.

“Maoism,” according to these revisionists, becomes a “response” to the limitations and fundamental deficiencies of Marxism, Leninism, Gramsci, and the Third International. By the same logic and methods – and with equal right – one could ask why Marxism did not produce any proletarian revolution in the 19th century, and therefore inquire into the “limitations of the theory of Marx and Engels,” proceeding to argue that Lenin would have compensated for the deficiencies and errors of Marxism itself.

In practice, the supporters of the New Synthesis extend this line of reasoning to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as well, and here too the pattern remains unchanged. Maoism, too, is said to have its limits and should therefore be supplemented with the positive lessons of the class struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, namely through the incorporation of erroneous and subjectivist theories derived from *Autonomia Operaia* or from the experience of the Red Brigades. And from this, they arrive – with great modesty – at the conclusion that the New Synthesis itself – variously proposed, whether in the Manifesto Programma of the nPCI on the



one hand or in the positions of Proletari Comunisti on the other – constitutes the overcoming of the alleged limitations of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism itself.

10.10.4. The falsification of dialectical materialism

The theory that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism develops according to the logic and method of the New Syntheses derives from the alleged necessity of applying historical-dialectical materialism to the very theory of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. While dialectical materialism focuses on the theoretical reproduction of social and political reality and class contradictions in order to enable revolutionary transformation, the theorists of the New Synthesis focus instead on the question of whether this or that formulation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism has succeeded or failed. In other words, the problem of historical assessment is made to coincide with the question of evaluating the application of proletarian ideology to the class struggle.

Those who do not consider this approach to be correct are immediately labeled as “dogmatic” and “lacking creativity.”

This thesis of the necessity of overcoming the limitations and inadequacies of revolutionary theory, together with the idea of incorporating into Marxism-Leninism-Maoism the “positive lessons of the practice of class struggle,” is supported in Italy by the two revisionist tendencies of CARC-nPCI and Proletari Comunisti-PCm. Their revisionism is, in the first instance, expressed in their attack on dialectical materialism.



The CARC-nPCI conceive materialistic dialectics as an “experimental science,” which they also define as “a method of knowledge and action.”

Proletari Comunisti-Pcm, on the other hand, assigns central importance – moreover in a revisionist interpretation – to the law of the “negation of the negation.”

In both cases, the distortion of dialectical materialism leads to the denial of the universality of contradiction and, consequently, to an interpretation of dialectical materialism as a logic and method for the eclectic reconciliation of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism with tendencies external and opposed to it.

10.10.5. The CARC-nPCI theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as an experimental science

In Giuseppe Maj’s *Manifesto programma* [hereinafter referred to as MP], which also serves as the basic training text of the CARC, it is argued that Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, would have set out “*the worldview, the method of action and knowledge, the objectives, and the general line of the communists*” [MP, p. 5; *emphasis added*].

In this confused definition of Marxist theory, what emerges is the characterization of dialectical materialism as a “method of action and knowledge.” A few pages later, the same concept is reiterated: “*Marxism became the conception of the world and its method of action and knowledge*” [MP, p. 8; *emphasis added*].



About a hundred pages later, dialectical materialism is again defined as a “*worldview and method of knowledge and action.*” Subsequently, it is stated: “*The party must be united on the common political line and on the worldview and method of action and knowledge of the proletariat, dialectical materialism, which makes it possible to derive the correct line from the analysis of the experience of concrete struggle and the concrete situation*” [MP, p.185].

The CARC-nPCI thus unquestionably define dialectical materialism as a “method of action and knowledge.”

Such definition merely reiterates the familiar revisionist thesis according to which “dialectical materialism” is a “method of knowledge”, rather than – as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism holds – a comprehensive theory of evolution and development encompassing logic, theory of knowledge, and method. In his *Philosophical Notebooks*, Lenin emphasizes that a single word is required to designate these three terms and states explicitly that this word is “dialectical logic,” not “dialectical method.” Referring to Marx’s economic theory, Lenin further argues in the *Philosophical Notebooks* that this theory is the result of the application of dialectical logic to the science of economics. Lenin thus highlights how Marxism itself arose from the application of materialist-dialectical logic to history, production, class struggle, and the study of nature.

The logic of dialectical materialism is therefore the foundation and heart of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. To attack dialectical materialism by reducing it to a mere “method of knowledge and



action” is to strip it of its scientific basis and, consequently, to open the way to eclecticism and opportunism.

In other words, it means denying that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is a science that also provides the philosophical foundation for its own scientific character, while rejecting all other philosophies of science, including that of “experimental science.”

Gramsci, in his polemic against Bukharin, reaffirmed this fundamental principle, namely that Marxism is scientifically grounded in itself: *“Orthodoxy should not be sought in this or that follower of the philosophy of praxis, in this or that tendency linked to currents estranged from the original doctrine, but in the fundamental concept that the philosophy of praxis is ‘self-sufficient’, that it contains within itself all the fundamental elements not only for constructing a whole and integral conception of the world, a total philosophy and a theory of the natural sciences, but also for bringing to life an integral practical organization of society, in other words, for becoming a total, integral civilization”* [emphasis added] (*Prison Notebooks*, Notebook 11, paragraph 27).

Gramsci further states: *“But it is the concept of ‘science’ itself, arising from the Popular Study [Gramsci refers to Bukharin’s manual], which needs to be critically destroyed; it is taken directly from the natural sciences, as if these were the only science, or science par excellence, as has been decided by positivism. But in the ‘Popular Study’ the term ‘science’ has many meanings, some explicit, others implicit or scarcely mentioned. The explicit meaning is the one that ‘science’ has in physical research. At*



other times it seems that method is indicated. But does there exist a general method, and if it exists, can it mean anything other than a philosophy? At other times, it could mean simply formal logic, but can this be called a method and a science?” [emphasis added] (Prison Notebooks, Notebook No. 11, paragraph No. 15)

Let us consider another passage from the MP of the CARC-nPCI: “*According to dialectical materialism, every phenomenon and event – those that fall directly under our senses as well as those known to us through other means, those that constitute the object of traditional natural sciences or of other established and recognized sciences, as well as others, including thoughts, forms of behavior, feelings, etc. – must be studied as processes of natural history.*” [p.249]

One should not be misled by the phrase “natural history.” This is simply an expression of their theory according to which “dialectical materialism” is an “experimental science.” Indeed, the CARC-nPCI argue: “*Like the laws of the natural sciences, the laws of the social sciences must also be understood in the sense of dialectical materialism... It considers the phenomenon as it seeks to reproduce it in laboratory experiments, thereby excluding the interference of the many factors that, in reality, condition its development.*” [MP, p.266].

In essence, the CARC-nPCI maintain that, just as the natural sciences employ the experimental method of involving the manipulation of natural phenomena in order to separate (abstract) the essential aspects from the disturbing phenomena, dialectical materialism is the analogous method in the sphere of social sci-



ences. Dialectical materialism, in other words, would indicate the path to knowledge through the creation of abstract models that are subsequently applied to concrete reality. This is a one-sided and distorted conception of dialectical materialism, one that assimilates the latter to the philosophy of science of pragmatism and logical empiricism.

The whole question of dialectical materialism as an “*experimental science*” is clearly set out towards the end of the MP, where it is argued: “*The theory of the PPW [protracted people’s war, ed.] indicates the path that the communist movement must follow in order to overthrow the existing power and establish the power of the working class. This theory is an experimental science: it was constructed through the elaboration of the experience of the struggle conducted thus far by the communist movement, and is verified and confirmed through the results that the communist movement obtains by applying it in the class struggle. It is the synthesis of gained experience, translated into indications, criteria, guidelines, methods, and rules for the revolution that we still have to carry out. It is an open science that is enriched, refined, and developed as the proletarian revolution advances throughout the world*” [p. 201].

The MP centers on its own theory of PPW [protracted people’s war; ed.]. The CARC-nPCI attempt to attribute this “experimental theory” to Maoism, in order to eclectically incorporate their alleged specific contribution into “Maoism” itself.

The general operation of the CARC-nPCI consists in presenting themselves, as self-proclaimed “Maoists”, as the heirs and true



continuators (in the name of “dialectical materialism” as an “experimental science”) of the positive aspects – purged of the “negative” ones – of the experience of class struggle related to what they define as the “second wave of the world proletarian revolution” which, according to them, began in the early 1970s.

Their conception of materialistic dialectics as an “experimental science” amounts to a method for eclectically reconciling Maoism with very different revolutionary experiences and positions, mostly originating in the 1970s, presenting them in a “Marxist-Leninist-Maoist” guise.

Therefore, those who consider the “method of experimental knowledge” as the “science of Marxism,” such as theoretical workerism within the field of sociology and economics, or, more generally, Giuseppe Maj and his followers, do nothing other than assert the necessity of placing this or that variant of empiricist and pragmatist scientism at the foundation of dialectical materialism. In the name of “materialism,” both its materialist and dialectical dimensions are undermined¹³¹.

On a more specific level, however, this position is reduced to empiricist and pragmatic opportunism, where success achieved in this or that aspect, in this or that particular and contingent ex-

¹³¹ The more or less open struggle against dialectics, understood as Hegel’s relevant contribution to Marxism, and therefore to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, in fact characterizes Avakian’s conception as much as that of Maj and the CARC/nPCI group. In place of dialectics, we find a sort of formalistic scientism and, therefore, eclecticism.



perience, becomes the basic criterion for the formulation of rules and procedures – that is, more precisely, of “recipes” and “techniques” to be applied in order to obtain results that, it is assured, will be on a wider scale.

All this is reflected in the theory of “protracted people’s war” of this group, in which the anti-democratic, anti-proletarian, and ultimately failed experience of support for the reactionary M5S party stands out as an example – regarding the activity of the CARC-nPCI – of a presumed destabilizing attack on the bourgeois project (at that time considered dominant) of broad coalitions, and therefore as a maneuver within “People’s War,” which Maj and his followers consider to have been underway in Italy basically since the drafting and circulation of the MP.

10.10.6. The revisionist distortion of dialectical materialism by Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia

Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia is a group that does not carry out systematic work aimed at theoretical elaboration¹³². From this point of view, it is a marginal group characterized by activity in the trade-union and broader movement sphere.

¹³² Proletari Comunisti-PCm Italia nevertheless relies extensively on the collaboration of a well-known Marxist intellectual, Dr. Antonio Giuseppe Di Marco, professor at the University of Naples Federico II. The problem is that Dr. Di Marco quite openly promotes workerism, gives a questionable interpretation of Marxism, and does not uphold Marxism-Leninism, let alone Maoism.



However, it must still be critically taken into account due to its persistent attempts to generate confusion at the national and international level on the question of Maoism. An important theoretical-political work by the Communist Party of Brazil-Central Committee¹³³ contains several fully relevant criticisms of PCM Italia. The international journal *Two Lines Struggle* contains some articles by this group which may provide an indication of its positions¹³⁴.

In the fourth issue of this journal, the PCm Italia opens its Critiques of the International Communist League by arguing: “*The unequivocal starting point is that historical dialectical materialism is based on the relationship between theory and (revolutionary) practice in its dialectical interrelation.*” [p.46].

Here we once again encounter the thesis that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism develops on the basis of the practice of class struggle. The article does not go on to explain, either theoretically or philosophically, what this “dialectical relationship” is supposed to consist of. The PCm then immediately adds the following statement: “*The three stages of our ideology are therefore the product of class struggle, or rather of the concrete and tangible results of class struggle. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is not the product of a subjective interpretation by Maoists*” [p. 46].

¹³³ *La rivoluzione di Nuova Democrazia è la forza principale della rivoluzione proletaria mondiale.* <https://nuovaegemonia.com/2024/09/30/la-rivoluzione-di-nuova-democrazia-ela-forza-principale-della-rivoluzione-proletaria-mondiale/>

¹³⁴ <https://revolucionobrera.com/lucha-de-dos-lineas/>



This thesis, which openly advances a mechanistic and economic materialist conception of the relationship between the “concrete and tangible class struggle” and the development of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism, simultaneously establishes a distinction between the “positive results” and the “negative results” of class struggle. In other words, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is said to develop by synthesizing and separating those conceptions, experiences, and lessons deemed positive and victorious from those conceptions, experiences, and lessons that instead express a failure to achieve the intended objectives or result in outright defeat. The theory of the PCm Italia is clarified a few lines later: *“The defeats of our class (that is, the fact that a revolution has failed to overthrow political power and establish proletarian power) are fundamental for moving forward. But it would be a contradiction, both from the philosophical standpoint and from the standpoint of the process that led to the development of MLM, to say that MLM today developed not as the result of a revolutionary victory – from which it was possible, as we said earlier, to internalize, rework, and return the lessons to the masses – but on the basis of a defeat”* (p. 47; <https://revolutionobrera.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/L2L-N.-4-Esp.pdf>).

Here the true substance of PCm Italia’s conception of the philosophy of dialectical materialism concerning the genesis and development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is laid bare. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism would develop by giving rise to experiences that are positive because successful and negative because characterized by the failure to achieve the intended objectives or



by outright failure. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism would therefore be an expression of the overcoming of negative experiences and the synthesis of positive ones, both in relation to the practice of class struggle not guided by Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory and to the revolutionary experiences produced under its guidance.

In short, we once again encounter the thesis according to which the actual development of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism would be an expression not only of its advances, but also of the limits, inadequacies, and failures supposedly generated on the very terrain of the formulation and application of revolutionary theory. This is the well-known revisionist theory that places at the center of dialectical materialism the law of the “negation of the negation”, according to which every advance necessarily contains a negative aspect – a limitation, obstacle, or resistance – pertaining to the very definition of revolutionary theory.

Setbacks in the class struggle and defeats are thus traced back to this negative aspect, whose overcoming (that is, the supposed “negation of the negation”) would lead to a new victorious development in a more organic form and on a broader scale. The text of the Communist Party of Brazil-Central Committee highlights how this revisionist interpretation of dialectical materialism based on the supposed theory of the “negation of the negation”¹³⁵ ultimately translates into a conciliatory and therefore ec-

¹³⁵ This view is also shared by another founding member of the international journal *Two Lines Struggle*, namely the “Communist Workers’ Union of Colombia (MLM).”



lectic attitude toward experiences, positions, and theories that are not Marxist-Leninist-Maoist.

10.10.6. The precursors of the Theory of the New Synthesis (L'Ape e il comunista and La Voce Operaia)

The precursors of the alleged New Synthesis of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism, developed on the one hand by CARC-nPCI¹³⁶ and by Proletari Comunisti-Pcm Italia on the other, can be traced back to the 1960s and early 1970s. More specifically, they are found, on the one hand, in the eclectic elaboration of the Red Brigades (see, among other works, *L'Ape e il comunista*), together with a considerable body of revisionist articles on “Maoism” published in journals such as *Controinformazione*; and, on the other hand, in the outcome of the Rectification Campaign of the PC(M-L)I in 1971-1972, which resulted in the formation of the PC(M-L)I – La Voce Operaia in place of the previous PC(M-L)I-Servire il popolo. It should be noted that the Rectification Campaign was largely the work of a group of intellectuals (Leonetti¹³⁷, Di Marco, Scalia, etc.) associated with

¹³⁶ The aforementioned text by Giuseppe Maj, entitled *Manifesto Programma del nPCI* (ed. Rapporti Sociali, March 2008), sets out the “New Synthesis” of the “communist thought” of the CARC-nPCI. As regards its application to Italian history and conditions, it has for nearly twenty years served as the reference bible of the CARC-nPCI, which since then have produced no further theoretically significant work, since the various issues of the journal *La Voce* have merely continued, up to the present day, to reproduce in different forms the positions contained in the MP.

¹³⁷ See, for example, the presentation of the daily newspaper *Il manifesto* <https://ilmanifesto.it/francesco-leonetti-acuto-sperimentatore> and the online



the New Left and with circles that were in part connected to the literary neo-avant-garde¹³⁸. This milieu also included the figure of Eleonora Fioriani, the main student of Geymonat¹³⁹, a proponent of the hybridization of neo-positivism and dialectical materialism. Through the so-called Rectification Campaign, the PC(M-L)I became the driving force behind an attempt to ‘renew’ Marxism-Leninism by means of a new synthesis of ‘Marxism-Leninism-Maoism’, Trotskyism’, ‘Bordigism’ and, above all, theoretical workerism. The group of PC(M-L)I intellectuals that produced this “new synthesis” did not take dialectical materialism as its point of reference, but rather a form of empiricist and pragmatist materialism that was hegemonic within the New Left during those decades. One particular expression of this “materialism” was that embodied by theoretical workerism¹⁴⁰. The his-

newspaper Contropiano <https://contropiano.org/news/cultura-news/2017/12/18/corvo-maoista-francesco-leonetti-098858>

¹³⁸ See in particular *L’Officina* di Vittorini (1955-1959) with Pier Paolo Pasolini, Francesco Leonetti, Roberto Roversi, Angelo Romanò, Gianni Scalia, and Franco Fortini, *Menabò* (1959-1966) [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Il_Menab%C3%B2](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_Menab%C3%B2)) and *Gruppo 63* ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Gruppo_63](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gruppo_63)).

¹³⁹ An exposition of Geymonat’s positions and those of his students on dialectical materialism is contained in the 1973 text *Attualità del Materialismo Dialettico* (ed. Feltrinelli).

¹⁴⁰ Particularly significant for understanding the philosophical foundations of the theoretical workerism of Panzieri, Tronti, and Negri of the first half of the 1970s is the figure of Galvano della Volpe. Initially a follower of Gentile and author of an attempt to revive Hume’s empiricism, then, after World War II, he became a proponent of a form of empiricist scientism. In 1949, Galvano della Volpe appointed Panzieri to a teaching position in the philosophy of law, and together they collaborated on plans for a journal entitled *Critica Materialistica* (see *Spontaneità e Organizzazione*, Raniero Panzieri, edited



torical core of Proletari Comunisti-PCm Italia was formed in this “school” and assimilated this type of “materialism,” continuing to pass it off as “dialectical materialism” to this day. However, it should also be remembered that Maj himself was at the time editor of the theoretical journal *Che fare?* of the PC(M-L)I until the dissolution of that party into the Autonomia Operaia.

by Stefano Merli, Ed. Biblioteca Franco Serantini, 1994, pp. XX-XXI).



11. WORK FOR THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

11.1. For Maoism

It is necessary to distinguish an initial phase, concerning the formation of the party, from the subsequent phases concerning its actual construction.

In order to achieve the formation of the communist party, it is necessary to train Maoist militants and to unite, at the political and organizational level, organizations and individuals that identify with Maoism. Under the present subjective conditions, a few hundred communist cadres, united on the basis of a Maoist theory adequately specified in relation to national conditions, would constitute a sufficient force for the establishment of a Maoist party. In general, it is necessary to oppose the conception that a Maoist party must necessarily be formed through the expansion of a particular organization by means of a gradual process of incorporating individual sympathizers and other satellite political groups. This conception does not take into account that the process of winning over and training militants, as well as achieving unity among different collective subjectivities, can occur only within the broader framework of demarcation among the various forces and tendencies, and more specifically that of two-line struggle. It is in the course of developing the struggle against revisionism, opportunism, and the black line that multiple Maoist organizations may emerge, each potentially subject



to a dynamic of splits, transformation, and unification. Lenin had already pointed out that the formation of a genuine Leninist party is characterized not only by a break with revisionism and opportunism, but also by a process of development marked by discontinuities and leaps. One of the reasons for such discontinuity lies in the fact that the class composition of communist organizations is itself destined to change, moving from an initial predominance of militants drawn from the intellectual petty bourgeoisie to a subsequent predominance of vanguard members of the proletariat.

11.2. The first phase of the war of position for hegemony

Lenin maintains that the party is formed on the basis of propaganda¹⁴¹. This thesis of Lenin, which proved its validity in the process of formation of the Russian Marxist party, was subsequently applied in the formation of various communist parties. In this regard, it is important to recall, on the one hand, Gramsci's *L'Ordine Nuovo* and, on the other, the process of formation of the Communist Party of Peru led by Chairman Gonzalo, based

¹⁴¹ “As long as the question was, and still is, one of attracting the vanguard of the proletariat to communism, propaganda takes the first place” (Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder*).



on the slogan “*Resume the path of Mariátegui on the basis of Maoism.*”

Adopting Gramsci’s terminology, it must be argued that the question of party formation pertains to the development and completion of the first phase of the war of position for hegemony. This phase unfolds on two levels. The first concerns the work of specifying revolutionary theory, which is synthesized in the recovery of Gramsci’s Thought on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the universal contributions of Chairman Gonzalo. Without advancing along the path of applying revolutionary theory to the history of class struggle, to the economy, to the formation of the state, and to the question of the intellectuals within what is commonly referred to as the “Italian nation”, it is not possible to identify the historical turning points of the proletarian revolution and therefore it is not possible to concretely develop the strategy concerning both the content and form of this revolution¹⁴². The second concerns the political orientation of individual subjectivities and collective organizations within the advanced sectors of the proletariat and the popular masses. The

¹⁴² The MP of the CARC-nPCI is a sort of *zibaldone*, in which the most disparate topics are addressed in a superficial, amateurish, and imaginative manner. See, for example, their theory of the Papal Republic, formulated without the slightest reference to historical materialism. Another example is their class analysis of Italian society, to which approximately 5 pages out of 300 are devoted. In these 5 pages one finds a number of questionable claims, including the claim that the popular masses have a net income of less than €100,000 per year (MP, p. 168). The Southern Question is then reduced to a few lines in the entire book (a brief mention on p. 116, which refers to p. 287, where Gramsci’s work is cited).



development of this first phase of the war of position for hegemony constitutes the path for winning over, training, and uniting the Maoists.

The first phase of the war of position advances by weakening and fracturing crystallized revisionist and opportunist political hegemonies. It does so by relying, as far as possible, on the intervention within mobilizations, struggles, and mass organizations that are entering political activity for the first time, and which therefore harbor an instinctive rejection of the old, chameleonic sly old foxes of the privileged petty bourgeois “communist” political strata.

This “war of position” demonstrates, against all revisionist and opportunist forces, that Maoism represents a new and distinct comprehensive intellectual perspective on collective life and communist political practice.

The “war of position” on the theoretical-political level disintegrates opportunist political forces, which sustain themselves on the practice of reconciling revisionism and revolution, insofar as it operates by releasing revolutionary aspirations and potentialities that remain suppressed or frozen within opportunist groups.



11.3. The subjects to be won over for the formation of the party

It is necessary to distinguish between the phase of formation or constitution of the party and that of its actual construction. The party is formed, first and foremost, through theoretical and ideological elaboration and its corresponding specification within a given national reality, and then through the unification, on the basis of this “specific thought,” of the most subjectively advanced elements. It is to these subjectively most advanced elements that we must look at today for the organization of a Maoist tendency and for its synthesis in the formation of the party. On this question as well, the various opportunist conceptions of party formation differ profoundly from those of the Maoists. Opportunist groups in fact argue, depending on the case, that one should rely on the most combative elements of trade-union struggles, on the promoters and activists of mass movements, on associations engaged in local issues, on student collectives, or even on progressive public opinion, that is, on “the people.”

At a time in which the formation of the party is on the agenda, the question is how to win over those subjectivities who are interested in and sensitive to major political, ideological, and cultural issues, and who at the same time are intellectually flexible and receptive, tend to swim against the tide, are combative in asserting their own viewpoints, and committed to a determined oppositional initiative. It is among such elements, whether individually or within small collective formations, that an interest in revolution and even in Maoism is present, at least in embryonic



form. It is among them that those may emerge who choose the party and the revolution as a life project, who may come to recognize the necessity to studying, understanding, and applying the revolutionary ideology of the proletariat as a guide for the transformation of themselves (Intellectual and Moral Reform) and the world (organized collective activity and political practice).

11.4. The relationship with the masses

In the phase of the party formation process, the subjective conditions – both in qualitative and quantitative terms – are not yet present for the possibility of a significant connection with advanced sectors of the masses, grounded within the formation of a revolutionary movement and sufficiently extensive mass organizations. Conversely, once the phase of formation phase is completed, the construction phase begins. In this second general phase, the party truly becomes the vanguard of the proletariat and the popular masses.

It should, however, be noted that the concept of “masses,” as Lenin clearly emphasized, is not a purely empirical concept. Following Lenin’s indications, the concept of masses must be understood in the sense of “masses in the historical sense,” that is, in the sense of “revolutionary masses.” The party is the decisive factor in the formation of increasingly extensive “revolutionary masses.” Once constituted, the party is effectively built by progressively incorporating revolutionary mass sectors that are themselves generated by the party’s activity. This development



continues even after the victory of the proletarian revolution, since the party aims to generate revolutionary masses throughout society and thus to incorporate the entirety of the proletariat and the popular masses. From this point of view, the party ceases to exist when the whole society has become revolutionary, as the division into antagonistic classes has been overcome and it is therefore capable of promoting communist relations of production.

In his writings against the economism of the “mass social-democratic movement,” Lenin is referring precisely to the need for the party to build and develop a revolutionary mass movement that is indissolubly tied to the party. The great Leninist lesson concerning the deviation of mass movements from their “spontaneous” course therefore lies in the necessity of building a different type of mass movement: a revolutionary mass movement that is an expression of the party’s initiative. This lesson, if summarized, means that a truly communist party transforms those strata most open to mobilization and struggle among the masses in the direction of the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat, incorporating them into the party’s organizations, and thereby enabling them to carry out the tasks of the proletarian revolution.



11.5. The organizations that emerge from this process

It is necessary to proceed from the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist conception according to which the process of party formation is, above all, a process of building a series of militant organizations. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the question of the formation of militant organizations from that of mass organizations.

This necessity may seem obvious to anyone who refers to Leninism; yet this is far from the case. In Italy, there are several opportunist political organizations that uphold Marxism-Leninism and even Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, but which neither address nor resolve, from a Leninist principled standpoint, the theoretical question of the distinction between organizations of militant cadres and those which, on the contrary, constitute mass and/or movement organizations (struggle committees, coordinating bodies, organizations engaged in campaigns or specific issues, etc.).

The formation of a Maoist party consists, first and foremost, in the creation of a set of organizations of militant cadres which, within the framework of ideological and political unity and democratic centralism, will engage in carrying out the tasks of the minimum programme of people's democracy and the maximum programme of socialism.



11.6. Mass organizations as “schools of communism”

In the process of party formation, in addition to militant organizations, there is also a need, secondly, for “mass organizations” operating in the most diverse political, social, and cultural spheres. The formation of such organizations is not the principal aspect, but it is evident that they provide a more favorable terrain for the formation of Maoist militants.

As a general rule, all types of mass organizations promoted and directed by Maoists function as “schools of communism.” During the phase of party formation, these organizations can only be established with a certain degree of difficulty. This is because the subjective conditions have not yet fully matured and because the main efforts must be directed towards the formation of the party. Nevertheless, these organizations are indispensable. The more effectively the party is formed, the more numerous and diverse must be the organizations working to educate, train, organize, and mobilize increasingly broad sectors of the masses.

In this sense, all mass organizations that operate as “schools of communism” serve as a “bridge,” continually elevating the most advanced elements of these organizations and winning them over to organized work related to the broader initiative and therefore, at present, to the tasks required on various fronts for the formation of the party.



11.7. Mass line and front politics

The mass line is a fundamental element of Maoist work. The greater the progress Maoists make in the process of party formation, the more extensive the work based on the mass line can be across the various fronts of opposition and struggle. The mass line is applied within mass movements and among the mass sectors in which Maoists are active (trade union organizing, youth and student activity, local initiatives, relations with the oppressed and exploited sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, etc.). In practice, the movements, working-class and mass organizations that are directly involved in such movements, as well as bourgeois social associations (sports, recreational, welfare, cultural, etc.) where the popular masses participate actively, provide spaces where Maoists must carry out their initiative guided by the mass line.

Through the mass line, Maoists aim to draw the masses into activity, mobilization, and struggle and to build dedicated mass organizations. Where conditions allow, they work to win over or split existing mass organizations led by the bourgeoisie and opportunists.

Maoists oppose the movementism of opportunist groups. However, they distinguish between sectarian and competitive movementism that is characteristic of the initiative, mobilization, and logic of opportunist groups and so-called alternative unions, and actual mass mobilizations.



When the masses become mobilized, even if under the influence of reformist, legalistic, pacifist, and opportunist positions, it is necessary for Maoists to intervene in order to split these movements and thus divert their most genuine and combative elements towards the strategy of the programme of the Anti-fascist People's Democratic Revolution on the road to socialism, towards the anti-fascist people's democratic front, and towards the process of party-building.

In this sense, the mass line and the mass organizations that develop on the basis of the practical implementation of this line function as a bridge. Its function is precisely to transform the consciousness, ideology, organization, and conduct of the popular masses in a revolutionary direction, overcoming vagueness, fluidity, fragmentation, dependence on bourgeoisie and opportunism, and the limited development of revolutionary consciousness.

In order to promote and implement the mass line and build the corresponding "bridge," Maoists establish specific "mass organizations" which may sometimes be temporary, for example when tied to particular struggles.

The mass line therefore takes up, in terms of objectives and programmes of struggle, the questions articulated by the most advanced sectors, with the aim of drawing those sectors – or at least part of them – away from the influence of the opportunists. Maoist intervention is not necessarily distinguished by the demands contained in immediate programmes of struggle; the essential task is rather to formulate correct positions and thus establish a



line of demarcation from the opportunist groups. This serves to build Maoist hegemony among the masses and to develop an independent mass mobilization led by Maoists.

The Maoist mass line is thus defined not only by its positions on the issues and demands contained in programmes of struggle, but also by its ability to develop initiatives aimed at breaking apart the opportunist camps. To this end, it becomes necessary in each situation to identify both the opportunist forces that must be confronted through independent action, and the forces that may be brought together to build an alternative bloc of struggle. Front politics, combined in various ways with independent action, is thus an integral component of Maoist practice based on the application of the mass line.

11.8. The organizations of the anti-fascist people's democratic front

It is typically revisionist to confuse “mass organizations” with those organizations that are intended to form the anti-fascist people's democratic front¹⁴³. The latter are not mass organizations in the strict sense. In their initial stage, they are specific political

¹⁴³ Such a deviation is characteristic of the CARC-nPCI, which interpret the construction of the people's bloc government – an event that should produce an irreparable political rupture within the bourgeois state and society – as an expression of a collection of the most diverse workers' and people's organizations.



organizations whose task is to prepare the subjective conditions for the anti-fascist people's democratic revolution. At a more advanced stage, once mass sectors have been incorporated into them, they develop into organs of political power arising as the expression and synthesis of the people's bloc, under proletarian hegemony, of the classes allied in the people's revolution and which constitute the basis of the revolutionary government. Throughout the course of the revolution, these organs are distinguished by their inseparable connection with the exercise of force, since it is impossible to conceive of an alternative political power whose political activity is not based upon the democratic principle of arming the popular masses. From this perspective, the struggle against Nazi-fascism in various European countries demonstrated that the construction of a revolutionary political front as an embryo of the New State is both possible and necessary, and is inseparably tied to the development of partisan forces and to the formation of a People's Liberation Army.

11.9. Seven tasks for the formation of the party

To summarize what has been outlined throughout the various chapters of this text, with particular reference to the question of party formation, it can be argued that theoretical and political work, propaganda, political guidance, and ideological training constitute at present the principal arenas of Maoist activity in party formation. More specifically, this work can be divided into the following seven points:



1. **SPECIFICATION AND PROPAGANDA.** Theoretical work for the specification of Maoism in relation to Italian conditions, and the related effort on the front of propaganda and struggle to establish it as the ideological basis for winning over the most advanced elements and achieving the unity of communists. In particular, this work must be directed toward a deeper analytical examination and the theoretical and political synthesis of the fundamental Questions of the Italian situation (discussed in chapters 7 and 8), which cannot be resolved within the framework of the existing economic and political order and which constitute the objective driving force of revolution in Italy. This theoretical work must be translated into propaganda among the advanced elements of the proletariat, the popular masses, and the petty intellectuals, demonstrating the necessity of revolution in Italy. Such propaganda must be conducted in a concrete, sober, and systematic manner, free from intellectualism and guided instead by an objective and scientific spirit, in contrast to prevailing approaches characterized by moralistic rhetoric, amateurism, ideologism, maximalist formulas, and confrontational declarations of intent.
2. **WAR OF POSITION AGAINST OPPORTUNISM.** A theoretical and political war of position against revisionist and opportunist forces. This struggle must be directed towards clarification and a different, more adequate, and deeper approach to all questions of genuine theoretical and political significance. It must therefore



seek to engage seriously in the positions of the various groups, approaching them with commitment and intellectual honesty, while always bearing in mind the need to act as an advanced force capable of putting forward a comprehensive hegemonic project. This applies in particular to those opportunist organizations (Fronte della Gioventù Comunista, Piattaforma Comunista, PMLI, CARC-nPCI, and Proletari Comunisti PCm) that refer to Marxism-Leninism or “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.”

3. **POLITICAL GUIDANCE AND INITIATIVE.** Propaganda, agitation, organization, and activity aimed at providing general political direction to the advanced sectors of the movements and the popular masses, on the basis of the line of the anti-fascist people’s democratic front, the anti-imperialist front, the class-based trade union struggle, the construction of a Maoist youth organization, the people’s movement for the liberation of women, and the development of proletarian culture and art. This work must focus on highlighting the interconnection between the various issues of current political importance (those placed on the agenda of the movements’ political and trade-union activity) and the necessity of a people’s democratic revolution in Italy, as well as the necessity of the world proletarian revolution against imperialism and inter-imperialist war. The objective is to achieve the unification of a range of advanced forces committed on various fronts to political activity among the most advanced sectors.



4. **MASS LINE AND MASS ORGANIZATIONS.** Activity based on the mass line across the various fronts of movement activity and the mobilization of the most combative sectors of the proletariat, youth, and the popular masses. This activity, which must lead to the formation of specific mass organizations, is characterized by the fact that, in its form, it presents itself as an initiative conducted through slogans and the most advanced demands of the programmes of struggle inherent to these movements, as well as the struggle for democratic rights and for the improvement of the conditions of the working class and the popular masses. In its content, however, the mass line is directed towards undermining bourgeois hegemony on all fronts among the democratic and progressive sectors of the workers and the popular masses, and especially the influence of social fascism (PD and confederal unions), revisionism, electoralism, reformism, movementism, and pacifism.
5. **FRONT POLICY.** In applying the mass line, it is necessary to evaluate the various forces case-by-case, carefully analyzing both the contradictions between them and the internal contradictions within each of them. This is particularly important with regard to social movements and the situation of the working class, youth, and other exploited and oppressed strata of the popular masses. The necessary erosion of bourgeois and opportunist hegemony over the democratic and progressive



sectors of the popular masses and movements is achieved, at the level of mass-line work, by implementing a correct approach capable of encouraging and directing the experience of those sectors of the masses that, albeit confusedly or embryonically, have just become to get involved. This means that it is not sufficient to act independently and promote independent initiatives. Such activity constitutes the basis and the essential aspect, but it must also be accompanied by an adequate united-front policy aimed at weakening and disrupting the hegemonic influence of one force or alignment after another. Only in this way can the advanced sectors of the masses verify through their own experience that the Maoists, in their application of the mass line, consistently seek the most effective combinations of forces and alliances to advance mobilization, defeat the most backward and opportunist positions, and point to a more advanced perspective. Thus, independent initiative and mobilization – which play a central and decisive role in breaking apart rival hegemonies – must be combined with a flexible and appropriately diverse and variable front policy, which must be able to penetrate everywhere, interact with and interfere in a challenging and disruptive way with the work of all other forces that have any connection with potentially revolutionary sectors of the masses.



- 6. THE ORGANIZATION OF EVENTS, TRAINING COURSES, AND PEOPLE'S SCHOOLS ON DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND MARXISM-LENINISM-MAOISM.** This work should pay particular attention to the question of specifying theory according to the guiding principle: "Let's resume again Gramsci's path on the basis of Maoism." It is necessary to promote both basic and more advanced forms of Maoist training directed towards all those individuals connected to, or emerging from, mass sectors who are approaching communism and, even more so, Maoism. While not excluding the need to resort to vis-a-vis training sessions, the cult of the "expert" must be rejected. This logic underlies the training of opportunist groups which, whenever possible, rely on researchers and professors, trade unionists, journalists, writers, freelance journalists, and other professional intellectuals. Such figures can only spread opportunism and revisionism, because the only possible proletarian militant intellectual is one who contributes, in a comprehensive and organized manner, to the formation of the Maoist party. Educational activity may be guided, but the essential aspect is that participants actively express their own impressions, opinions, and positions, so that the training itself becomes a collective process through which, by means of direct participation, a further process of self-education is also achieved. Only in this way can the logic of delegation, parasitism, idealization of the expert, competition, and performance anxiety – which characterize the theoretical



and political training promoted by opportunist groups – be overcome.

- 7. CONTINUOUS IDEOLOGICAL FORMATION.** Ongoing education should be directed toward: a) the general and specified ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, as well as the understanding of the political line, programme, and strategy, in opposition to the positions of various opportunist tendencies and forces; b) the decisive question of specific ideological formation (SIS, see section 8.9. of this text). A significant portion of the overall work of a Maoist party must be devoted to an uninterrupted process of ideological training.

11.10. The construction of the hegemonic apparatus

In order to accomplish the tasks outlined in the previous section, it is necessary to build a specific hegemonic apparatus. Gramsci devoted considerable attention to this task, and certain sections of *the Prison Notebooks* devoted to the critical assessment of various types of newspapers and journals (e.g., “Types of journals”), as well as various observations on university and on educational and training methodologies, are directly connected to the problem of building an effective hegemonic party apparatus. The development of modern technology, computer science, and communication systems has given rise to new forms of media, both in comparison with the era of Lenin’s theoretical-political newspaper and with Gramsci’s time, nearly a century ago. It



therefore follows that a careful study of Gramsci is necessary to understand, on the basis of his insights, how to continue doing a critical analysis of the technologies behind the media that have appeared since his death, right up to the present day. This task partly intersects with, and overlaps, the equally necessary effort to resume and further develop Gramsci's work on the mapping of intellectuals. As Gramsci himself rightly pointed out, the question of the nature and use of technologies and media cannot be separated from the problem of the class content that one wants to express and put forward through them. Everyday experience, moreover, demonstrates that certain forms of media also tend to encourage a subjectivist and irrationalist conception of the world. From this standpoint, the international Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movement offers instructive experiences of considerable interest and importance, and it is therefore necessary for Italian Maoists to study these experiences thoroughly and synthesize them, so as to apply them in accordance with the requirements of political intervention, while taking into account, in each specific instance, regional or local peculiarities.



It is necessary for militants, sympathizers, and supporters to devote, in an organized and coordinated manner, the utmost attention to the ideological and organizational aspects (as well as to the acquisition of the relevant technical and economic resources) involved in the construction of a hegemonic apparatus corresponding to the work of party formation. Without building such an apparatus, possibly in the most appropriate forms, it is not possible to envisage reaching, within a politically meaningful time, the formation of the party in Italy. This question today is as important as the question of establishing a theoretical-political newspaper in Lenin's time. It is a question that Lenin himself devoted particular attention to in his struggle against movementism and economism.

11.11. The need for an international organization

The founding in 1984 of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), active across four continents and in several dozen countries (at the time including three Italian organizations as well), represented a significant step forward for the International Communist Movement following the coup d'état in China one month after Mao's death in October 1976. This crime, carried out by modern revisionists and Chinese social-fascists and social-imperialists, resulted in the extermination of the Maoist vanguard forces that had led the great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the imprisonment of the main leaders of the revolution, and the vile assassination of Jiang Qing – the leading figure of the Chinese Communist Party after Mao's death (and, among



other things, Mao's wife), who was left to die in prison without medical care. The birth of the RIM was a response, albeit not the principal one, to the offensive of world counterrevolution, expressed in the fascist transformation of China¹⁴⁴. At the time of its formation, however, this movement had not yet made a clear choice between "Mao Zedong Thought" and "Maoism." Thanks to the struggle led by Chairman Gonzalo of the PCP, the RIM issued a new document in December 1993, a second international declaration, "*Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism!*"¹⁴⁵, which established reference to Maoism. This represented a further significant step forward. Nonetheless, within the RIM there remained the influence of the semi-Trotskyist positions of Avakian and the RCP(USA). All of this subsequently combined with the revisionist turn of the Nepali party led by Prachanda, which brought an end to the people's war in Nepal and generated confusion and disorientation on an international scale. The split within Prachanda's party came too late, and the formation of a Maoist left faced a number of difficulties. In this context, the

¹⁴⁴ These events of decisive historical and political importance are omitted by the renegades of the CARC-nPCI, who have always defended social-fascist forces on an international scale and who, whenever possible, actively collaborate with them (see their participation, from April 21 to 25, in the Moscow forum following an invitation from the red-fascist, warmongering remnants of the former CPSU, now well embedded within Putin's intelligence and military apparatus (<https://nuovaegemonia.com/2025/04/19/i-carc-npci-alla-corte-dellimperatore-diffidiamoli/>)). As far as the RMI is concerned, the Carc-nPCI have done nothing other than attempt to discredit its work, spreading all kinds of falsehoods.

¹⁴⁵ https://bannedthought.net/International/RIM/AWTW/1995-20/II_mlm_20_eng.htm



RIM could no longer play a useful role for the international proletariat.

The recent formation of the International Communist League, which has continued Chairman Gonzalo's struggle for the establishment of Maoism as the guiding ideology of the world proletarian revolution and which unites important parties and a range of Maoist organizations across different countries and continents, has constituted a qualitative leap and has opened, on a world scale, a new phase in the development of the Maoist movement now under way.

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