# A Condemnation of the Renegades to Come

# A Reflection on 'Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder'

#### Amadeo Bordiga, 1960 Translated and Edited by The International Library of the Communist Left, 2008 and Radical Reprints, 2020 http://www.sinistra.net/lib/upt/comlef/ren/renegadeie.html

#### Introduction

The present text, published here for the first time in the English language, is the translation of a party work which appeared in our press in the years 1960-61, and was later published as a pamphlet in Italian and French.

Forty years after the publication of **«'Left-wing' Communism, an Infantile Disorder**», the opportunism of all countries was feeling so confident about its control over the working class to dare to extol Lenin and his work, while betraying his shining legacy of theory and fight in the daily subjugation of the proletarians to the wills and needs of the bourgeoisies.

In November 1960 they went so far as to convoke in Moscow a «Conference of the representatives of the communist and workers' parties» which begot a «Resolution», which we readily rechristened «Swine Manifesto». The resolution, to which our text often makes reference, said nothing new: as opportunism cannot say anything that hasn't already undergone the distinctive criticism of Marx and Engels, first, and then of Lenin. Ever since Proudhon's formulae, the novelties of opportunism have limited themselves to the search for new explanations (the notorious discoveries!) of alleged «new situations», able to justify the betrayals perpetrated towards the proletariat; and to always new and incomprehensible terms that make it arduous for the workers to understand that they're being deceived.

It was therefore not the necessity of refuting new arguments to make us write this text, nor was the itch to join the fashion of commemorations, which are made to the dead, while Lenin and his work are for us more alive than ever. We rather believed that it was worth devoting a work to such a subject, as a constant duty of the party is the defence of both doctrine and organisation from the slanders that mercenaries and renegades do not spare us: and the closer such renegades have been to us, to revolutionary marxism, the more they are vile in the mystification, after irreversibly going over to the enemy.

The thesis of the swines was (and still is, as they are unfortunately still free to root in their troughs) that the Left, in that writing and later, was confuted by Lenin; and that therefore

we were some sort of deviationists, of spuricus extremists, slyly infiltrated within the international revolutionary movement.

Our text demonstrates that the divergences, were of a merely tactical and contingent nature, and due to the peculiar historical experience as well as to the different look-out point which characterised the movement in Russia, if compared to the movement in Europe. It was up to the international party to decide, and history gave a clear and definitive answer to questions that it was legitimate to put at that time. But the text also demonstrates the accordance between us and the Bolsheviks, both in 1920 and in the years before, when we didn't know Lenin yet, on quite more fundamental issues: the assertion of the necessity of a violent revolution of the proletariat, led by the marxist party, disciplined and centralised; the assertion of the subsequent revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat; struggle with no compromises against the two «extremisms», anarchist and reformist: this was the trench in which we were side by side with the Bolsheviks, against all the real «extremists», actually carriers of rehashed petty-bourgeois ideologies, who proved to be the first obstacle to knock down before being able to attack the central power of capitalism. The cleaning up of the international party could not be thoroughly done, and the consequences are today under our very eyes.

Such an accordance on the principles - which appears crystal clear to anyone who takes the trouble to study without ulterior motives both the positions and the practical activity of the Communist Left - was not due to telepathic phenomena or to mysterious international connections, but rather to the fact that both movements had made reference and studied the large doctrinal legacy of marxism, as well as the lessons of the class struggles of the past century. Like us, the Bolsheviks didn't discover anything, and Lenin himself demonstrates it in all his writings. But for the first time it was then possible to verify in facts, in history, a teaching that already existed within our doctrine's framework.

Lenin must be read, and his greatness appreciated, in this light: not as the founder of «leninism», a word that Stalin invented to betray and counterfeit word by word the teachings of the maestro, but as a powerful scholar of marxism: it was his lifelong theoretical work to enable him to «make» the revolution, and not the opposite. Which higher lesson can be drawn from the October, than that the revolution can take place and be victorious only if led by a really marxist party, which in the decades before has devoted a great deal of energies to the strengthening and sharpening of its theoretical weapons?

Lenin's «'Left-wing' communism» weighed the achievements of that experience, and laid the foundations of the revolutionary work to come, according to his style: before uniting, let us set out clearly our positions; those of the Left were in order, and Lenin acknowledged it. But those who were then branded as traitors are nowadays still pretending to be champions of the working class, and «'Left-wing' communism» was written against them. That's why in 1960 it had to be thrown in the face of the 81 swines of Moscow, and in 1984 we still vindicate it as a text of ours, today more topical than ever.

That's also why we're making this work of 24 years ago available to the proletarians of English speaking countries, The history of the international workers' movement saw its early, exciting episodes taking place precisely in England, which was utilised by Marx for his studies on the capitalist economy, and where unionism was born. But the proletariat

achieved the highest points of the political struggle in other countries, while the British working class was being firmly trapped by opportunism, openly patriotic and collaborationist, and by the corruption exerted by the opulent British Imperialism. The revolutionary wave which took place after the first world war saw the formation also in England of a communist party which, although initially on marxist positions, could not escape a degeneration in a Stalinist sense, which by the way was to be the fate of all the parties of the IIIrd International. Thus, while the British working class can boast glorious traditions of economic struggles - which in several instances seriously troubled the British society - virtually absent are traditions of revolutionary struggles, in which the masses of the Continent have been involved in several historical turning-points. Such a different past has always been an obstacle for the historical linking between the British workers' vanguards and the international revolutionary party; but the linkage will take place, because the international communist party is not Russian, German or Italian, but rather a world party, which draws its origins from all the experiences of the proletariat, from the victories and the defeats, from the conquests as well as from the retreats that the workers of all countries have experienced in the course of their class history. It is therefore also the party of British, American and Australian workers, it is also the product of their struggles and the champion of their historical interests.

It is not absurd to say that marxism, born in France and England, grown in Germany, successful in Russia and tirelessly defended in Italy, might in a not too far future even see the assault to the citadels of capital come from those very working masses of Great Britain and U.S.A.

Working men of all countries, unite!

International Library of the Communist Left, 2008

#### Chapter I: The Setting of the 1920 Historical Drama

During a commemoration of Lenin, given in Rome's Casa del Popolo on the initiative of the Communist Left soon after his death, the speaker, after giving the «alleged tactical opportunism of Lenin» its due, quoted a passage from the beginning of the classical **State and Revolution**, as follows: «Lenin says it is inevitable for the great revolutionary pioneers to becoming counterfeit, as was for Marx and his best followers. Will Lenin escape such a fate? Certainly not!»

Thirty-six years have passed since this easy forecast. Their balance, accompanied step by step by the pitiless critique of the Left, demonstrates how the volume of forging shit opportunism tried to accumulate on Lenin's figure is at least ten times more nauseating than that showered on Marx

The base system of distorters is always the same. Firstly, build up a legend in place of the historical truth that caused the formation of both method and programme of those high communists. Pick up within this legend isolated, adulterated quotations detached from the real struggle conditions that gave rise to the shaping of such classical texts. Finally, barefacedly change completely their significance by taking advantage of the difficult

conditions in which the revolutionary class fights. This class, in most cases, owing to the poverty in which it lives, must be satisfied with an armament of theoretical arms furnished by third- or fourth-hand junk-shops.

A marxist work, carried out, as is the case within our ranks, without fatuous and conceited amateurishness as well as with no despicable, easily corruptible arrivism, makes it possible instead to demonstrate that in «'Left-wing' communism» every page, every phrase fall, as an implacable lash, upon the brazen face of traitors and renegades.

To set about this it is necessary to forget about rhetoric and demagogy, and go back to the positive history of facts. In them alone - and not in the low gossipy chronicle of contemporary events - can be read the unique, clear trace of revolutionary doctrine and accomplishment, which the Kobolds have tried for a century to contradict.

#### Spring 1920

Within only four years after Lenin's return to Russia, October 1917 had taken place and, through the ruined IInd International opportunism's unmasking, just one year before (March 1919) the IIIrd had been founded.

The bolshevik party was receiving from every direction in the world curses and approvals, fierce invectives and passionate supports. At the time we are referring to, the first commitment of the Russian party was still the hot war, the civil war against the Whites, Denikin, Judenic, Wrangel, the thousand avalanches resting on German, English, French, Japanese military plans. Such a period, that we dealt with in wide works on the path of the revolution in Russia, had maintained in the front-line this not only political, but also openly military fight: everything was to be subordinated to victory.

If Lenin had been an opportunist, as they tried to depict him for forty years, he would not have been able to find one minute to choose, between supports and declarations of war. In a world of fierce enemies, all friends would have been unconditionally accepted, to such a point urgent was the need of finding supports within the international world, where all bourgeoisies were centuplicating their ferocious efforts, enraged by their terror of the red dictatorship.

Lenin instead writes the text for the preparation of the IInd Congress, convoked for June, 1920. He knows from the lessons of history - as the text before anything else demonstrates - that the victory in Russia occurred because the party was, in the course of its foundation and preparation, pitiless and blunt as to the acknowledgement of enemies and allies. His first worry is that the world revolutionary party must not be formed without a rigorous foundation of programmatic and organisational doctrine, even if it may involve the rejection of many, many supporters from outside Russia.

Such a selection is banally interpreted by borrowing bourgeois parliamentary politics. A danger from the «right» was already evident, as individuals between the IInd and the IIIrd Internationals would have liked to penetrate into the new one, to cast a blight on it: Kautskyism, centrism; Lenin had already fiercely hammered them. But further supports were to be carefully examined, those coming, in the political jargon, from «left», from

anarchists, from libertarians, and from the so-called revolutionary syndicalists of Sorel's school.

All these people were supporting the Russian events by virtue of their acceptance of armed violence in the class struggle. But Lenin knew only too well that the warming up of a few blockheads (for the most part personally real cowards) for the sight of a punch-up or of a twopenny shooting had nothing to do with the revolutionary position. He knew that such people, erroneously called leftists, are often of a proletarian origin, and sincere in their mistakings. He knew just as well that it is not a matter of imparting moral absolutions, but of organising the revolutionary forces: he just used towards those deviated ones less scathing terms, if compared to those given to the right-wing opportunists (even if within both ranks were misled workers and would-be intellectuals aspiring to become leaders).

The main danger of this very false extremism is the refusal of the fundamental teachings of the Russian revolution as regards both state and party as essential instruments of the revolution, throughout a whole historical phase. Anarchists had been judged, both as doctrine and organisation, in the course of Marx and Engels polemics within the Ist International. In Russia, says Lenin, they proved themselves astray, though if predominating in 1870-1880, «thus revealing the ineptitude of anarchism as a revolutionary theory». As for sorelian syndicalists, they are less known to Lenin, being characteristic of latin countries; there, the criticism of their doctrine had been made by right-wing marxists almost until the war (not in Italy: it is known, however, how reformist socialists, sorelian syndicalists fell into social-chauvinism: France and Italy).

But Lenin could see the mistaken school getting on within a wing (called «left») of the Spartakus Party German Communists, which had split into K.P.D. (Communist Party of Germany) and K.A.P.D. (Communist Workers' Party of Germany), and within Gorter's and Pannekoek's Tribune Dutch group.

Why does this faction, in spite of its open sympathy towards the October revolution, worry Lenin? **Precisely because Lenin was not an opportunist but rather a defender of theoretical rigour**.

Lenin almost excuses the false leftists of Russia and France, because they had never been on the line of a marxist tradition. By virtue of his brilliant awareness, he is rather concerned about those who still declare themselves marxists, as well as we do ourselves towards those who call themselves.... leninists. Lenin quotes from an article of Karl Erler, carrying an edifying title: «The Dissolution of the Party», the following pearl: «The working class cannot destroy the bourgeois state without destroying bourgeois democracy, and it cannot destroy bourgeois democracy without destroying parties.»

Lenin cannot here avoid bursting out:

«The more muddle-headed of the syndicalists and anarchists in the latin countries may derive 'satisfaction' from the fact that solid Germans, who evidently consider themselves marxists, go to the length of making utterly inept statements.» (Lenin, Selected Works, ed. 1977, p. 529)

## A Central Point: The Dictatorship of the Party

The Communist International could not be defined only by the getting together of those socialists who vindicated armed violence as means of proletarian class struggle. The distinction would have been insufficient. Now, all these groups are rightly suspected by Lenin, but not as much as the right-wingers, as in a passage he says: «At the Ninth Congress of our Party (April 1920) there was a small opposition, which also spoke against the «dictatorship of leaders», against the «oligarchy», and so on. There is therefore nothing surprising, new, or terrible in the «infantile disorder» of «Left-wing communism» among the Germans. The ailment involves no danger, and after it the organism even becomes more robust.» (op. cit., p. 531)

This is the idea of Lenin of the famous infantile disorder. But he knew well which other danger was coming from the centrists and from the famous «right». It was the «senile disorder» of communism, that led the revolutionary organism to the present death, its results being far more detrimental than the ruinous crisis of the IInd International.

Within the surge of comment to which the Russian revolution gave rise, a great many of our critics and detractors - who had understood nothing of the grandiose theory of Marx - Lenin on proletarian dictatorship - started railing against the «dictators», or the dictator, Lenin, in a chorusing that ranged from right-wing bourgeois to democrats and anarchists.

Liberals were forgetting the gigantic figures of their dictators, from Cromwell to Robespierre, to Garibaldi; among libertarians some, quoted in the abovementioned commemoration, had foolishly written: **mourning or feast**? The left-wingers in Holland, Germany and other countries were hesitating on the «dictatorship», and Lenin rightly demonstrated that they were doing so because they were imbued with a democratic and petty-bourgeois mentality; the same that scandalised Kautsky's centrists and all the imbeciles who since then, up to the present, have been shouting: **socialism is only democracy, freedom for all**! And the same, shady characters, today speak in the name of Lenin.

But in these very pages, allegedly written against us, true left marxists, Lenin scatters, as befits him, all hesitations and principle distinctions between proletarian dictatorship, party dictatorship, and even dictatorship of given persons.

In his Vth chapter, titled: «'Left-wing' communism in Germany. The leaders, the party, the class, the masses», Lenin amply quotes from a pamphlet of the left-wing German communists, who put the empty alternative: **should we, in principle, strive for a dictatorship of the Communist Party, or for a dictatorship of the proletarian class**? And who further on set one against the other two solutions: **the party of leaders**, acting **from above**, and **the mass party**, which expects the upsurge of the struggle **from below**.

The criticism developed by Lenin at this point merely consists of establishing that, if we repudiate the «party leadership» that scandalised those communists, we repudiate both proletarian dictatorship and revolution, and if we don't want the party to act through

«leaders» just for the fear of this word, we relapse in the same impotence. **Our party is different from all other parties, our mechanism of revolutionary men is different from the flattering and advertising mechanisms of other movements**. And Lenin will connect this to the vital necessity for an «illegal» organisation.

With his remarkable talent for clarity, Lenin is not going to give us here the philosophical definitions of such «categories» as masses, class, party and leaders. Time was pressing and the settlement took place in another way. But Lenin's text gets rid of all hesitations on the necessity for the dictatorship to be a party one, or, in given extreme cases, of certain party members; which has, since then on, horrified all orthodox thinkers, who are nevertheless always ready to prostrate themselves before **summit meetings** of four **Duces** or, as we say, of, four big shots.

Nothing to do with electoral mandates and internal referendums.

«The mere presentation of the question - 'dictatorship of the party or dictatorship of the class; dictatorship (party) of the leaders, or dictatorship (party) of, the masses?' - testifies to most incredible and hopelessly muddled thinking.... It is common knowledge that the masses are divided into classes; that the masses can be contrasted with classes only by contrasting the vast majority in general, regardless of division according to status in the social system of production, with categories holding a definitive status in the social system of production; that as a rule and in most cases at least in present-day civilised countries - classes are led by political parties; that political parties, as a general rule, are run by more or less stable groups composed of the most authoritative, influential and experienced members, who are elected to the most responsible positions, and are called leaders. All this is clear and simple.» (op. cit., p. 527-8)

#### **Correct Diagnosis of «Leaders» Treason**

Such clear words recall those of Engels on Spanish anarchists:

«A revolution is the most authoritarian fact that can take place».

The class revolution is a war, a civil war; an army, headquarters, and a party are necessary as well as, after victory, a state, a government, men in power.

The text here explains how the muddling of ideas was brought about by the necessity of acting in an illegal situation, as was in Germany after the first war, in place of the former full legality.

«When, instead of this customary procedure, it became necessary, because of the stormy development of the revolution and the development of the civil war, to go over rapidly from legality to illegality, to combine the two, and to adopt the 'inconvenient' and 'undemocratic' methods of selecting, or forming, or preserving 'groups of leaders' - people lost their bearings and began to think up some unmitigated nonsense.» (op. cit., p. 528)

Many good proletarians, who had their fingers burnt by the betraval of socialists in 1914, became distrustful of leaders, whoever they might be. Lenin reminds us that the degeneration of leaders is an old and cleared up thing for marxists, and cannot be settled by «contrasting the leaders with the masses». It is not the matter of bad leaders and good but rather of degeneration of **both** leaders and masses. masses. a «The principal reason for this was explained many times by Marx and Engels between the vears 1852 and 1892, from the example of Britain. That country's exclusive position led to the emergence, from the 'masses', of a semi-petty- bourgeois, opportunist 'labour aristocracy'. The leaders of this labour aristocracy were constantly going over to the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly on its pay roll. Marx earned the honour of incurring the hatred of these disreputable persons by openly branding them as traitors.» (op. cit., 528-9)

This phenomenon, says Lenin, occurred again during the war and within the Second International,

«has produced a certain type of traitor, opportunist, and social-chauvinist leaders, who champion the interests of their own craft, their own section of the labour aristocracy. The opportunist parties have become separated from the 'masses', i.e., from the broadest strata of the working people, their majority, the lowest-paid workers. The revolutionary proletariat cannot be victorious unless this evil is combated, unless the opportunist, social- traitor leaders are exposed, discredited and expelled. That is the policy the Third International has embarked on.» (op. cit., p. 529)

Which marxist can confuse such an historical position with the libertarian proposal: the evil is in the party, the evil is in the famous «leaders»?

The matter was of principle and of programme, rather than of contingent, or, worse, of local, **national**, **German**, tactics. It is an historical truth that leaders and whole parties, both making reference to the proletariat and even to its specific and classical revolutionary doctrine, have nevertheless passed on to the class enemy's side; but it must not lead us to repudiate the arm of the party and the arm, if we can thus call it, of the «leader». Marxist doctrine, as a matter of fact, has since its appearance refuted once and for all such objections, from the Manifesto, which demands the organisation of proletariat into a class party (which, according to the First International statutes is «opposed to all other parties»), to the writings of Marx and Engels on revolution and counterrevolution in Germany; and so on.

Today we can say more. At the times of Marx and Lenin it had not yet occurred that a «State» of the proletarian victory, such as in Russia, could degenerate to the point of going over to the enemy's side, as regards to both foreign (war alliances) and domestic politics (capitalistic economical and social measures). Such an historical event alone is sufficient to demonstrate how foolish are those who do not realise that today's opportunism has consummated something twenty times more infamous than yesterday's, as known to Marx and Lenin. It did not only dishonour both party and men of the proletariat, it even brought dishonour upon the first state of the proletariat is corruptible, socialists and communists are corruptible, and the party is corruptible, but also: the proletarian state is corruptible - owing to relations among real historical forces and not to **the frailty** 

**of flesh**, or to other ethical explanations! - But the above does not allow us to say: let us renounce the state; **power** is a dirty thing, that corrupts anyone.

This theoretical heresy was well known to Marx and Lenin who crushed it once and for all. And Lenin sees in the mistakes of principle of the German leftists the same wrong idea: he confirms that we must be able to handle all such difficult weapons: men, party, and guidance of the state government. The problem is that of showing the historical path, according to which our political militants, our revolutionary party, our state apparatus, will be totally **different** from all those - partly, sad to say, also proletarian - that the past has produced: and they will be able to get the original form that our doctrine theorised.

Lenin, who insuperably put the problem but - being man and mortal - never saw its solution, realised that the German leftists, as they had their flank exposed to doubts towards the party form, so they mistrusted even the state form. They had not understood, as to doctrine, the historical form of dictatorship, that marxism had unhesitatingly enunciated. They erroneously believed that the party was to be dissolved to no longer see traitors, as well as the state, to avoid the famous petty-bourgeois «corrupting temptations of the exercise of power».

## The Duration of the Dictatorship

Thus, the danger against which Lenin rose up was not the error of tactics, as we will deal with later on, but a fundamental mistake of principle, and therefore a mistake which cannot be put right just by means of party internal organisational measures. In that historical moment it was the matter of taking the «constituent» measures of the new world communist party, where the error can in most cases be avoided by cutting to the quick with the sword, with no fear of the scissions and of the defamed «excommunications», and not by being tempted by an increased membership. Before closing this demonstration, it is worth giving an incomparably vigorous passage of Lenin, from which it may be inferred that the dictatorship must be accepted for a hard and long historical phase, and not for a short moment. It is not an «emergency» measure, as could be named with the present day fashionable slang, but it is the vital part, the oxygen, that keeps our theory and our battle alive.

«To proclaim that in general political parties are unnecessary and 'bourgeois'.... It all goes to drive home the truth that a minor error can always assume monstrous proportions if it is persisted in, if profound justifications are sought for it, and if it is carried to its logical conclusion. Repudiation of the Party principle and of Party discipline - that is what the opposition has **arrived at**. And this is tantamount to completely disarming the proletariat **in the interests of the bourgeoisie**. It all adds up to that petty-bourgeois diffuseness and instability, that incapacity for sustained effort, unity and organised action, which, if encouraged, must inevitably destroy any proletarian revolutionary movement.» (op. cit., p. 529)

From this point on the passage is so classical, and - such will be the conclusion of the present study - so much in agreement with the theses of the Italian marxist left, such as we maintain them today, Lenin being no more with us, and as we maintained them when he was present and even before the liaison of our movement in Italy with the new

International and Lenin (liaison that took place in those very months of 1920, when he in person made arrangements according to which a delegate of the communist abstentionist fraction of the Italian Socialist Party, not included in the «democratically chosen» delegation, was to go to Moscow), that from now on the underlines are ours and not Lenin's.

«From the standpoint of communism repudiation of the Party principle means attempting to leap from the eve of capitalism's collapse (in Germany), not to the lower or the intermediate phase of communism, but to the higher. We in Russia (in the third year since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie) are making the first steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism or the lower stage of communism. Classes still remain, and will remain everywhere for years after» (Lenin's underline) «the proletariat's conquest of power. Perhaps in Britain, where there is no peasantry (but where petty proprietors exist), this period may be shorter. The abolition of classes means, not merely ousting» (or killing, our note) «the landowners and the capitalists, - that is something we accomplished with comparative ease; it also means» (it is Lenin here who underlines) «abolishing the small commodity producers, and they cannot be ousted, or crushed; we must learn to live with them. They can (and must) be transformed and re-educated only by means of very prolonged, slow, and cautious organisational work. They surround the proletariat on every side with a pettybourgeois atmosphere, which permeates and **corrupts** the proletariat, and constantly proletariat relapses into **petty-bourgeoisie** spinelessness, causes among the disunity, individualism, and alternating moods of exaltation and dejection. The strictest centralisation and discipline are required within the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract this, in order that the organisational role of the proletariat (and that is its **principal** role) may be exercised correctly, successfully and victoriously.»

(The last underlines, of Lenin, indicate that **semi-proletarians** may have been of help during the civil war, but afterwards they disorganise and decentralise: we will underline now).

«The dictatorship of the proletariat means a persistent struggle - bloody and bloodless, violent and peaceful, military and economic, educational and administrative - against the forces and traditions of the old society. The force of habit in millions and tens of millions is a most formidable force. Without a party of iron that has been tempered in the struggle, a party enjoying the confidence of all honest people in the class in question,»

(we annotate that as within the masses, even within the **class** are unhealthy residues, victims of the counter-revolutionary influence; in principle, if they cannot be treated pedagogically, they will be put down with no pietism)

«party capable of watching and **influencing** the mood of the masses» (not of submitting to it!),

«such a struggle cannot be waged successfully. It is a thousand times easier to vanquish the centralised big bourgeoisie» (read monopolist and fascist) «than to 'vanquish' the millions upon millions of petty proprietors; however, through their ordinary, everyday, imperceptible, elusive and demoralising activities, they produce the **very** results which the bourgeoisie needs and which tend to **restore**» (underlines of Lenin) «the bourgeoisie. **Whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.» (op. cit., p. 529-30)** 

With such an explicit and decided formulation Lenin meant to get rid of another silly idea of left-wing communists, who believed the workers' soviet being a substitute of the communist party to the extent of suggesting to convoke the soviets before the revolutionary struggle. Consequently the institution of a soviet, which is as good as the proletarian dictatorship as the bourgeois do not vote for them, would be entitled to «dissolve the political party». The Italian Left had since 1919 resolutely fought such an antimarxist thesis, that was later condemned at the IInd Congress in the resolution on soviets or factory councils, to which it will be worth going back to.

#### Strategy and Tactics of the International

The press of Stalinist opportunism has recently pointed out that Lenin's «'Left-wing' communism» is forty years old. For this mob there's nothing but ceremonial, and notebooks full of set dates for conventional bowing and scraping, birthdays, name days, and pleasantries of the kind. They are of course interested in «'Left-wing' communism» for the passages hundreds of times, always cheating, quoted against the Italian Left, although they are for the most part commendatory. But this is the least important point we will deal with, and even with Lenin we were worried about discussing over the international method, and not over the Italian petty province.

It is here important for us to establish that Lenin dealt with contingent or national tactical matters with the sole purpose of making clear points of principle concerning both the constitutional and the historical strategy of the revolutionary communist movement, only caring about the goals of the **world** revolution and the organisation of the **world** communist party.

We will show how in this vital work the Italian Left supported him and, better than anyone else, understood him on crucial points. But, for better clarity of our exposition, that cannot be brief, the tactical points at that time commonly ascribed to the Dutch-Germans must be reported, as it has been too convenient to identify their positions with those of the Italians.

The German opposition was founded on two practical points. First of all, it asserted that communists had to abandon the opportunist trade unions, called in that time «reactionary»; and on such an issue there was nothing in common with the Italian communists. Though if in Italy there existed, with an anarchist tendency, those left-wing trade unions that K.A.P.D. proposed to create in Germany, we never supported in Italy the split within the trade unions, and worked within the very reformist Confederazione Generale del Lavoro in order to bring down its leaders, in accordance with the accurate tactics that Lenin preferred. Here the tactical solution comes directly from the principles. The revolutionary function is primarily in the party, and not in the trade unions or in the factory councils. The necessity was therefore, and Lenin obviously agreed, that of forming

the new communist party by splitting the political party, and not that of boycotting the right-wing trade union or any other trade union; on the contrary, it was then the moment of fighting for the unitary trade union.

But the second mistake of the German left-wingers was the boycott of parliamentary elections. See, the philistines exult, Lenin had to censure both Germans and Italians. But Lenin knew and taught that the positions were different in the two cases

It is not easy for the ordinary nitwit to understand that one thing is denying the primary function of the communist party in the revolutionary insurrection and in the State, and leaving it to other «immediate» proletarian organs, such as trade unions, councils and soviets (such being immediatism, our main enemy), and from such a denial of the political aspect of the struggle to derive also the denial of the parliamentary aspect. It is another to set, in a given historical phase, legalitarian policy against revolutionary policy, a matter we discussed with Lenin without coming to agreement; but we accepted for the sake of discipline his solution.

It will be easy for us to demonstrate, at the end of this study or in the next one, totally devoted to parliamentarism, that in this case we were actually with Lenin as regards the principle, and that the disagreement was a tactical one, while the present-day traitors are, as to the parliamentarism issue, in principle against Lenin and ourselves. As a matter of fact, at the IInd Congress the discussion was on the best way to destroy parliamentarism, and Lenin with the majority upheld that such destruction was to be carried out from the inside of it and not from the outside. We went inside, and not only are parliaments still there, but the clowns who call themselves leninists even swear on their eternity, and are ready to defend them. Following them on this issue, the masses are no less deviated and go to the polls with the socialdemocratic faith that it is a «way to socialism».

#### The Plan of Lenin's Work

In order to show the gap between us and those who quote by taking sentences out of context (who, even for this reason, can only be pupils of Stalinist distorters), we will draw both programme and principle positions from the examination of all parts, in order, of the pamphlet on «'Left-wing' communism».

We will recall the summary, after giving additional historical details. In the theses of the IInd Congress «on the main tasks of the Communist International», point 18 declares that the conceptions about the relations among party, working class and masses of several movements are inadequate. Such movements are the Communist Workers Party of Germany, part of the Swiss Communist Party, the Hungarian magazine Kommunismus (whose beautiful struggle for the Russian revolution could not hide doctrinal errors of the idealist type), the English Socialist Workers Federation, the American I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World), the Scottish Shop Stewards (factory committees). It is also true that here are condemned together both trade unions and parliament boycotting, but it means as a matter of fact taking an orthodox marxist stand against what we are still fighting today, even within antistalinist groups, that has the name of «immediatism».

Another point. During a pre-congress meeting in Leningrad it was discussed whether such movements could be admitted to the congress as sections, or just as observers. While surprising even the Russians, the Italian delegate proposed the exclusion of such movements, advancing the argument that it was the congress of a political parties' International, and that only communist parties could join it. It was later made clear in the «conditions of admission», the famous 21 points.

Shall we then make use of Lenin's «'Left-wing' communism»? It is a matter of reading it, and of being able to read it. We have already given an historical outline. The summary is as follows:

1 - In what sense can we speak of the international significance of the Russian revolution.

2 - An essential condition of the Bolsheviks' success.

3 - The principal stages in the history of Bolshevism.

4 -The struggle against which enemies within the working class movement helped Bolshevism develop, gain strength, and become steeled.

5 - «Left-wing» communism in Germany. The leaders, the party, the class, the masses.

6 - Should the revolutionaries work in reactionary trade unions?

7 - Should we participate in bourgeois parliaments?

8 - No compromises?

9 - «Left-wing» communism in Great Britain.

10 - Several conclusions.

Appendix:

- 1 The split among the German communists.
- 2 The communists and the independents in Germany.
- 3 Turati and Co. in Italy.
- 4 False conclusions from correct premises.

We have already mentioned the historical moment when Lenin resolved to write this text, very important for its theses, valid at all times, which is continually outraged nowadays by the official, alleged **leninists**. We then dwelled upon the subject of section 5, to show which was the main worry of Lenin: the danger of a belittlement of the primary function of the party, as well as the fear of the party dictatorship. A real, classical condemnation of the overworked, immediatist and workerist **antipoliticism**, always breached by classical marxism.

We will touch on all other topics later on. As to the parliamentarism issue, we will point out that Lenin's line involves boycott and participation; we will recall the history of the Italian party, and the ridiculous phase of the withdrawal, together with the bourgeois Aventino, wanted by the centrists, while the left, no more at the lead of the party, imposed the return.

We will quote a passage where Lenin shows that perhaps the abstentionists would have been better splitting in Bologna, October 1919, from the overwhelming majority that wanted the elections, with Turati. As regards to the theory of compromise, we will recall about the refusal of the Brest-Litovsk peace in 1918, while the Italian Left, though unconnected with the Russians, shared Lenin's position of signing the treaty with the German bandits, and not that of the revolutionary war till extermination.

On the issue of trade unions and factory councils it will be easy to demonstrate that, then and after, the thesis the International was fighting was just that of Gramsci's ordinovists, whose orthodoxy has always been doubtful.

We acknowledge such a manner of reading Lenin or Marx being laborious. But it is the only one able to defend from the rampant opportunist ruin.

Whoever likes sensational effects, and contents himself with commonplaces and sentences deceitfully taken out, can make himself at home in the cesspool.

# Chapter II: The History of Russia or the History of Mankind

## **Russian and World Revolution**

By understanding the orderly exposition of Lenin's work - which, owing to «urgent» needs, preluded the theoretical settlement of the IInd world congress theses (Lenin widely participated in person to such a work), and which was given, awaiting such theses, in its second edition the subheading: Popular conversation essay on marxist strategy and tactics (the classical Imperialism itself, owing to the author's modesty, was subheaded as popular essay) - we will wonder whether all those who quote it, in accordance with the fashion, against the Communist Left, against the only current faithful to marxism, have ever read its first page.

The first page is sufficient to destroy the masterpiece of Stalinist infamy, which for its counterrevolutionary consequences beat by far the inglorious deeds of any socialpatriots of 1914; i.e., the ignoble «theory» of **socialism in one country**. Meantime, both Stalin-Khruschevian newspapers and the «rectified» short course of the bolshevik communist party history still keep saying that such alleged theory was founded by Lenin!

Which right-wing socialist of the IInd International has ever gone so far as writing an outand-out forgery such as the following, from «Unità» of August 31st, 1960? «From the mistaken assumption that the conquests of the socialist revolution in Russia could only be defended by the support of a world socialist revolution, the «leftists» drew the conclusion that the task of the soviet power was in the first place of stirring up the revolution in other countries, through a war against world imperialism».

Here is the first forgery against the left, who wanted to stir up the revolution outside Russia by means of the action of the International of communist parties, and not with a war of the Russian state. This idea rather characterises the early «Stalinism», as distinct from the modern and far more infamous khruschevism.

But the gigantic forgery is at Lenin's expense:

«Lenin proved» the new manual points out «that this theory of 'stirring up' the international revolution had nothing in common with marxism, according to which the development of revolution depends on the maturing of class struggle within the capitalist countries. It is a matter of fact one of the presuppositions of the leninist conception of 'peaceful coexistence... »!

Thus, for the compilers of the new manual (which is boasted as free from certain forgeries of the first one, such as Trotsky's conspiracy to kill Lenin at the time of Brest-Litovsk, but which keeps carrying the lie that Trotsky did not follow Lenin's policy), marxism-leninism must be the theory for the revolution's sleeping.

We reminded that the first chapter deals with the international importance of the Russian revolution. Those who read again the explicit definition of Lenin on the characters of the Russian revolution being of a general, international significance, should not forget the official thesis of present day leninists, of the kind of Khruschev and Togliatti. Since the XXth Russian congress these gentlemen have proclaimed that each country has its own «national way» to socialism, which will therefore be, according to the circumstances, somehow different from the Russian way. What are then, according to this concoction, the characters of the Russian revolutions? They don't make a mystery of it. Proletarian dictatorship, soviet system, revolutionary terrorism, and, why not, insurrectional violence, are all supposed to be merely accidental and fortuitously Russian. The destruction of parliament itself (Constituent Assembly) would have been a peculiarity of the Russian revolution and not, as we exulted at the time, enthusiastic and unanimous in principle with the true Lenin, the first accomplishment of the marxist theory of proletarian revolution, we were waiting for in all countries.

#### Let us now Read Lenin!

«In the first months after the proletariat in Russia had won political power (October 25 - November 7 -, 1917), it might have seemed that the enormous difference between backward Russia and the advanced countries of Western Europe would lead to the proletarian revolution in the latter countries bearing very little resemblance to ours.»

It is already worthwhile to stop a little, although this is a popular essay, and not a palimpsest. Lenin does not compare the Russian revolution with world revolution, he speaks about Western Europe. As a matter of fact, in 1920 Lenin, as well as ourselves (nothing prevents anybody to proclaim both fouls, but it is forbidden to claim to be leninists those who think with a reversed tendency in every field), was not so much expecting the revolution in Asia or America, but between Russia and the Atlantic Ocean. Such was the condition for the Russian revolution not to historically capitulate, as it had to.

Why did it seem that the development of revolution in West Europe was to be dissimilar to that of Russia, and in what sense? Russia was backward, above all politically, as it had come out of feudal despotism only a few months before and therefore its revolution could be different from that of a country where despotism and feudalism had been overthrown centuries before, as in France or England. This, and all other actual differences, could have suggested the expectation for the Russian proletarian revolution to be less dazzling, more uncertain, hesitant, if compared to that of fully capitalist countries, where it could quite rightly be expected as more clear-cut, decided, overwhelming. It is enough to think that the hegemony of the proletariat and of its party on the «remaining working people», central postulate of this work of Lenin, would have been in the industrial Western Europe far more easy and complete.

Only some philistines of the IInd International, who were to be surpassed only by those disgusting ones risen from the corpse of the IIIrd, could insinuate that proletarian terror, dictatorship, wiping out of parliament, were not European but «Asiatic» characteristics - since then such a ludicrous commonplace was coined.

The opportunists of that time did so to put to shame red Russia, the present day more infamous ones repeat it, pretending everyone to believe that in that way they're extolling it.

If the Russian revolution got rid of a parliament just a few months after the institution of a true electoral system, what would have been the presumable difference for the countries that had been parliamentarian for a century? It takes the horny face of today's traitors to insinuate that in these countries parliament becomes a possible way to socialism (have the social democrats in the last century said worse?), and that therefore in Russia it was bayoneted away for fun, for carelessness, or because the great Vladimir was drunk on vodka.

#### **Characteristics of all Revolutions**

Lenin writes to establish that, in spite of the radical diversity between the starting social and historical situations, the essential processes of the bolshevik revolution will take place in all countries. What are such processes? The thorough study of this work, as well as of the whole body of non-counterfeit marxist-leninist works, enables us to answer clearly. It is understood that whoever believes that the events of forty years have imparted an opposite course to history may do so, together with **abjuring** marxism-leninism. «We now» (April 1920) «possess quite considerable international experience, which shows very definitely that certain **fundamental** features of our revolution have a significance that is not local, or peculiarly national, or Russian alone, but international.» (op. cit., p.512)

Here the writer is afraid of being misunderstood and intends to specify. «I am not speaking here of international significance in the **broad** sense of the term: not merely several but **all** the primary features of our revolution, and many of its secondary features, are of international significance in the meaning of its effect on all countries. I am speaking of it in the **narrowest** sense of the word, taking international significance to mean the international validity» (it would be maybe better translated with the word value) «or the **historical inevitability of a repetition, on an international scale, of what has taken place in our country**. It must be admitted that certain fundamental features of our revolution do possess that significance.« (op. cit., 512) Certain, and not all? It is precisely the thesis of the left in the communist international congresses. Lenin explains it immediately after. But it is worth pointing out why in the broad sense **all** events are of world significance, and in the narrow sense only **some**, that get (or rather are confirmed) into the marxist programme of revolution, are such. The liquidation of the imperial family was of the utmost international importance, and there's still cackling about it. But **in the narrow sense** it is not a feature to be «anywhere inevitably repeated». In countries without a dynasty there won't be such a necessity. The sons of the Tsar were killed for the dynastical right of succession; where such a right does not exist the killing is useless.

Therefore, the features, valid in the narrow sense for all revolutions outside of Russia, will only be some, not all; some will not be valid. Which ones and why? It is enough to read carefully, and it can be learnt by a passage of the utmost importance.

«It would, of course, be grossly erroneous to exaggerate this truth and to extend it beyond certain fundamental features of our revolution. It would also be erroneous to lose sight of the fact that, soon after the victory of the proletarian revolution in at least one of the advanced countries, a sharp change will probably come about: Russia will cease to be the model and will once again become a backward country (in the «Soviet» and the socialist sense).» (op. cit., p.512)

It is a central idea of leninism: the revolution will soon spread in Europe. After its victory, in Germany for instance, Russia will end up at the back in the social path leading to economical socialism, as the German structure will leave it far behind. Lenin's idea is completed by the concept that, beside a soviet Germany or, better, beside a soviet Europe, social Russia will be able to shorten the path from its old economies to capitalism, and from this, although in a state form, to socialism.

Such a doctrine is just a negation of that, inane, of the country of socialism, and **of the model country**, **of the leading country**, which indecently prevailed after Lenin. Between the theory of the model to imitate, and that of Russia at the rear of the revolution, lies the same contradiction existing between the degenerate national way to socialism and the above mentioned, strong statement:

«historical inevitability of a repetition, on an international scale, of what has taken place in our country».

The theory of the Russian model was just the first formulation of the present-day superstition of emulative coexistence.

On the return from Russia in 1920, in front of hosts of proletarians who seemed to be expecting the description of a promised land, we, humble pupils of the great Lenin, resolutely fought the belief that we had gone to see socialism **the way it was, it worked**, as if it were a child's toy, or a sort of sputnik, an invented, created thing.

Although socialism had not yet existed on earth, we knew, as marxists, the way it **had to be**, and we were sure of it, for the world and for Russia, where the shining human mechanism had not yet started functioning. Splendid was the force of marching

revolution, hard, painful and accepted, towards the far communist joy: all European proletarians had to, and only they could, give it to themselves and to the Russians, once they'd been able to overthrow all the continent's bourgeois states.

The antimarxist and antileninist position, living in the present day's wicked theory of coexistence, lies in the **theory of the model**. Gramsci personified in Italy such a gross error when he commented upon October, by writing: Revolution against «The Capital». According to historical materialism the proletarian revolution in Russia, where capitalism was not sufficiently developed, was **impossible**; if it had won, the conclusion to draw was obvious: both economical determinism and materialism are wrong; true and shining is instead voluntarist idealism, with Lenin as the hero of the myth, who had been able to force history and to create, from the most adverse conditions, the Model, the so much longed-for Utopia. There was nothing to do but to make a pilgrimage to kiss the hem of the Prophet's chlamys: to contemplate the model and to report its description and secret to the awaiting Western masses, who were to **copy** it.

But Lenin is there; without posing as a messiah, and therefore so much more simple and great. He refers in all respects to the materialism of Marx, enlightens with his dialectics the history he is living, and laughs at the model; which is as such a poor thing, and it will not take a long time to become obsolete, and he believes and wishes it will happen.

Those who believed him to be the **Capital's** executioner will bow their heads and open their eyes to the light: Gramsci actually did it, as long as his poor physical force sustained the acuteness of his look.

Today the blue light of Vladimir's eyes is also dead, but among many things we have left is his disparagement of the silly idea of the model to be imitated, which is sufficient to confound forever, with his typical, pitiless, polemical power, the senseless construction according to which the world turns communist thanks to a miraculous imitation.

#### **Russia's Lessons**

The Russian revolution did not therefore have, in the leninian outlook, the function to show to the world a socialist structure, but rather a different and far greater international function, that of teaching by which sole means and arms, everywhere, the power of capital and all its associates could be overthrown.

Such a teaching already existed within the fundamental lines of the doctrine, but for the first time it could be verified in deeds, in history.

It was not a matter of taking pictures of the Russian framework - though if at that time it was much less contaminated than today by the real stigmata of mercantile capitalism, emulating this damned West - but, if such an image can be allowed, of having the motion picture of the revolutionary event, and from it to draw what could be called the decisive **sequences**, universally valid for all Europe.

In this way a dynamic, not static, model appeared to our overwhelming enthusiasm of that glorious time: not a cloying recipe, but rather the eruptive flaming of the social palingenensis.

Lenin says it like this:

«At the present moment in history, however, it is the Russian model that reveals to **all**» (it's he that underlines, dear scoundrels) «countries something - and something highly significant - of their near and inevitable future.« (op. cit., p. 512)

We may have said it in a too long-winded way, but the demonstration is important to us. Our **model** is not a present «project» for a present reproduction, but rather the meaning of a lesson of the past, that must serve for an **inevitable future**.

Although man is an ingenuously imitative animal, and the humanity of 1960 is giving pitiful proofs of it, in 1920 we clearly saw in such a charge the power of the leap from past to future, as well as the faith of immense multitudes in the infallibility of the great revolutionary theory.

We were living a fervent and fertile epoch. Lenin wrote:

«Advanced workers in all lands have long realised this; more often than not, they have grasped it with their revolutionary class instinct rather than realised it.» (op. cit., p. 512) Not **culture**, emulating the bourgeois schools, but **instinct**!

In the course of his outstanding study Lenin will indicate to us the various essential traits of the universal revolutionary line.

«Herein lies the international «significance» (in the narrow sense of the word) of Soviet power, and of the fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics.« (op. cit., p. 512)

Here the introductory chapter of **«'Left-wing' communism**» somehow digresses, owing to the requirements of polemics, that we will see being of the utmost importance, and involving topical comments. But the above words enable us to annotate what Lenin promises to specify as the content of the **fundamental** (we would rather say always valid) **traits** of the Russian revolution.

They are the «principal» ones, and Lenin admits that there are two kinds of them: of bolshevik **theory** and **tactics**.

What characterised, with international repercussions, the glorious bolshevik communist party is a system of principles within its doctrine. But nobody has the right t o say that the theory is bound to a system of principles, while tactics can be **free**, **unprejudiced**. What in several congresses at Moscow our left maintained, lies on this position of Lenin himself: also for **tactics**, and not only for the theory, it is necessary to establish a system of principles; besides, they must be valid for all countries and parties of the International. The Rome Theses of 1922 were a proof of it.

The text accuses the treacherous leaders of the IInd International and the centrist leaders such as Kautsky, Bauer, Adler, who - though if not vulgar social patriots -, not having understood the general validity of the system of theoretical and tactical principles that led the bolshevik party to victory, «proved to be reactionaries» and traitors. Here Lenin slaps the pedantry, meanness and ignominy of a pamphlet (that was of Bauer) called **«The World Revolution**», that hypocritically contrasts the imaginary democratic, peaceful and bloodless (we have today the right to add «emulative») features of the **world** revolution with those of the Russian revolution; as a matter of fact, with those of its features that must belong to all revolutions, in the line of which in 1920 - knowing that everything was at stake - the revolutionary battle in Western Europe was given.

After this lash for the centrists Lenin, having named Kautsky, wants to show that when he was a marxist, as far back as 1902, he wrote an article entitled «The Slavs and Revolution», where he admitted that the guidance of the European revolution might pass into the hands of the Russian proletarians; after that the revolutionary centre had been in France in the first half of the 19th century, and at times in England, and in Germany in the second half.

How well Karl Kautsky wrote eighteen years ago, exclaims Lenin, who, until his not remote death, always wrote in the same manner. Today we can echo: how well Kautsky wrote **fiftyeight** years ago!

The ice crust shut on the ultra-memorable exploit of Slav proletarians, and on the gravestone of such ice is written: pacifism, coexistence, détente, democratic and parliamentary way to socialism!

Whereas Lenin exposed the infamous League of Nations as a fortress of capital, today's Russia, that abjured him writes such tombs tone inscriptions on the no less sordid green tables of the United Nations Organisation.

Marxist revolutionaries are certainly not bringing about an Olympiad of modern times, in which the flame of communist revolution is handed down. But Marx and Engels, a not yet lifeless Kautsky and an always bright Lenin, saw such a passing from England or France to Germany and to Russia; today Russia has fallen after being covered with glory. Today, we are sure that the great flame will flare up again and we are thinking of Western Europe as Lenin described it at the beginning of «'Left wing' communism», only chance of a rise against the emulative oppression of both the shameful America and the degenerate Russia; maybe by levering, while the sinister diplomats of both sides lewdly manoeuvre the issue of the roughshod ridden Germany, upon such a country that (although in the long term) can see in its history a proletarian revolution, rising against both Russia and America, no matter if they will be enemies or friends.

Or perhaps the half century, that whites have lost, will be recovered in the march, roaringly accelerating of their yellow and black brothers.

#### The Dictatorship and the Philistines

We shall not leave this introductory chapter of Lenin's text without developing some inferences that are in his destroying attack upon Karl Kautsky, Otto Bauer and Friedrich Adler, as it is for us of an immense importance the fact that Lenin has always levelled his hardest strokes against such people, called in those vears centrists, independents, second and half internationalists, halfway between the IInd and the IIIrd. Lenin regards them as more dangerous than the rightists, social democrats or social patriots, open allies and cops of the bourgeoisie, whose names were Scheidemann, Noske, Vandervelde, MacDonald, etc., with their war and post-war shameful deeds.

As a matter of fact Kautsky was in Germany the first one to set up an opposition against the social patrioteering parliamentary majority (it must not be forgotten, as regards the sum total of parliamentarism we will deal with in its due place, that Karl Liebknecht himself, en August 14, 1914, bowing to party discipline, that was by the way the discipline of the parliamentary group, voted silently, sad to say, in favour of the war credits to the Kaiser's government). In Austria Bauer and Fritz Adler, son of Victor, the old marxist, were the leaders of what is called Austro-Marxism (as if there could be national marxism!): in Vienna Fritz was tried for his brave opposition to the war.

But such people maintained, as theoreticians - and they made the most of such a reputation -, that there was incompatibility between marxism and **dictatorship**, and acidly defamed bolshevism and leninism as a violation of sound socialism. According to them, marxists had the duty of not breaking the rules of free, democratic consensus, of masses acceptance, of the liberal-democratic opinion of the majority of «citizens»; and they were the ones who created the most shameful falsification of Marx.

Lenin springs on them with fire and sword, and as witnesses and militants of that historical battle to the death, we have not forgotten such an historical teaching. We venture to say today that such a real, practical, material behaviour, that our everlasting contradictors would call with the parabourgeois adjective «concrete», is more meaningful, as both style and teaching, then the unsurpassed written form itself of Lenin's polemics. Owing to his tremendous responsibilities before history, this extremely unscholastic leader of the masses was not to lay himself open to the easy criticism of renegades, in face of the immaturity of proletarians, who were coming out of a recent antidespotic revolution; which would have happened, had he openly written: We don't give a damn about referendums and numerically expressed consensuses; on the contrary, we are certain that when we go in the direction, opposite to that of such pathological remains of bourgeois time slavery and servilism, then we are on the straight and narrow.

But those who were young at the time, and had undergone no corruption, could not forget the norm (though if not written in theses or theory book): Ferociously thrash those who appear closest politically speaking; and you'll never be wrong!

On the one hand we have the example of Lenin, i.e., of the revolutionary of those years, within the reality of combats among millions of men; on the other hand is the pitiful and infamous end of fools, who, making a wide use of a shameless falsification of what Lenin wrote, and did, have followed the opposite norm, that consists in the bloc, the front, the isolation to the right of a fictitious enemy, which is just the repetition of what the traitors

of World War 1 did. The champions of the third historical wave of opportunist plague did not stop themselves at the bloc with centre- and right-wing socialists, they've gone far beyond - not just in war time but even in peace time -, up until the bloc with bourgeois democrats and liberals, and with Catholics. On a social standpoint, not only a bloc with corrupted proletarians, but with petty-bourgeois, up to an open collaboration with the middle classes.

Theoretical questions cannot be separated from practical ones. Lenin did not merely delight in confounding these professors about their false exegesis of Marx; there was much more. Those scoundrels, at the very moment when armies, supported by the bourgeoisies of the West, were dashing to bloodily quench the bolshevik power and the revolution as a whole, solidarised with the **whites** wished their victory, as a punition for the crimes of «dictatorship» and «terrorism» committed by the glorious leninist vanguard. We then learnt that **always**, when the proletarian victory will be about to be achieved in the only «inevitably foreseeable» historical way, such front-loving riff-raff will behave in this manner, and the proletariat, if not aware of it, will fall betrayed.

It is not by accident that, when Kautsky, the most truculent antibolshevik, wrote as described above, while in Russia the answers were gunshots, Lenin would draw up «**Proletarian dictatorship and the renegade Kautsky**», and Trotsky would write the formidable text «**Terrorism and Communism**».

In what do Kautsky and bad company differ **from** those who today proclaim that dictatorship and terror were methods «peculiar to Russia 1917», that the other countries are now to be spared? Aren't they too, as Lenin pronounced in a sentence with no appeal, liberal-marxists, marxists gone over, bag and baggage, to liberalism and the bourgeoisie?

#### The Slander is Always the Same

Today the names of Messrs. Bauer and Adler can still be written (see Rome's «**Messagero**» of September 2, 1960), to remember their criticism of bolshevism, and at the same time to declare beaten their theory on a successful proletarian and socialist movement «without dictatorship and terror»; which in substance is right (it's always the same old story, from the opposite extremity one can see better than from the benches next to us, if we are allowed to use such an image, worthy of the parliamentary side-show).

A Pole, Deutscher, after Stalin's death wrote a book entitled **«Russia after Stalin**». The idea of this recent writer is that modern Russia is evolving toward a liberal, or socialdemocratic form, however it may be called. But another, American, «russologist», Croan, contested Deutscher's thesis as not being new, as it is the same of famous Otto Bauer's 1931 book: **«Capitalism and socialism toward the world war**».

If after forty years we still have in the way an Otto Bauer, that Lenin had forever got rid of, whose fault is it, but of the alleged pupils and filthy falsifiers of leninism?

## Chapter III: The Cornerstones of Bolshevism: Centralisation and Discipline

Since the XXth congress the same people have put on the low act of having repented of dictatorship and terror, only peculiar, for «local» reasons, to the Russian October, and not to the anticapitalist revolution wherever it breaks out. Of course, according to the Kremlin gang, dictatorship must not be seen as a means of struggle for the world revolutionary proletariat; which is to use culture, civilisation, and emulation, in place of terror. But dictatorship, terror, and even more truculent means are still suitable when their power is at stake!

What is the «marxist» doctrine of Bauer-Deutscher? Stalin resumed and appropriated the motto of Lenin, i.e., that the Russian revolution consisted in soviets and electrification. According to them, Stalin had wiped out the soviets, alleged true popular democratic representative body in political assemblies (which are on the contrary a class structure for dictatorship which, Lenin demonstrates in the text we're dealing with, fail if there is no dictatorship of the revolutionary party; and not a new, ludicrous arena for a multiple-party system dance); but he had accomplished electrification. Not only that, he had carried out with it both school and technological education of the Russian people. Such are the foundations of every admirable democratic system, an atmosphere where, according to these people, socialism can breathe; and Stalin had unintentionally laid the foundations of the new Russia, parliamentary, liberal and pluriparty, with free elections, etc.

Kautsky himself - whose venomous temperament had led him since then to say that the crime of dictatorship could only be repaired by an armed repression from outside, which he dreadfully applauded - hurled at such an old Bauer's thesis.

Kautsky insulted the «partner» Bauer for the latter's optimism about a «sound» evolution of Russia, while our third man, Adler, sided with Bauer. It is not incorrect to say that Adler was not driven by a confidence of Stalin becoming democratic, but rather by the fear of fascist totalitarianism, that was invading Europe, and by the hope, that would have come true (Adler spoke at that time as secretary of the IInd International, which could outlive the IIIrd, shame of shames!), of the salvation of bourgeois democracy from the fascist danger, thanks to an alliance with Russia (infamy and supreme outrage against the bolshevik tradition).

But the waverings of these professionists of opportunism have not such an importance, as to hide the fundamental significance of their thesis.

It was formulated as follows: The proletarian and socialist revolution in «civilised» and «advanced» countries will take place in a way that will exclude both terror and dictatorship. In Russia, causes have counted, that radically distinguish it from advanced, modern countries. Such causes were not just tsarism, but above all the alleged, tremendous **ignorance** of Russian people. Those clowns, who believe that Lenin was an **Asiatic despot**, maintain that if the Russian people were not so much **uneducated**, they would not have tolerated his methods.

We saw on the contrary, into such a glorious method, the link between the formidable revolutionary instinct of the great Russian proletariat, and the formidable conquest of the view of history derived from its great marxist party, which was already master of the science of tomorrow when the vile professors of the West were still scratching around on the despicable culture of the past.

**Instinct** is at an inverse ratio to **culture**, which is spread by the ruling class through its countless, contemptible petty schools. We admire a proletariat that has not even elementary qualifications, but holds the supreme qualification of possessing, because it experiences it, the revolutionary truth, from which the bourgeois science is at a centuries long distance.

It appears vain therefore the tall story according to which Stalin took the way of scholastic petty culture, thus leading the Russian people up to the level of socialism. In such a manner the Russian people were only brought up to the level of bourgeois imbecility, fraught with technologies and academic bodies, of priest-like sermons of modern augurs of the so-called «advancing science», in a world that cowardly draws back.

Although from such a cultural hoax of the Russian people parliamentary liberalism did not emerge, it does not mean that there is no deterministic explanation. Dialectically speaking, the bourgeoisie is living an epoch of free, illuministic progress, which in its first phase is not only a class one, it is also of the humanity. Marx described how in its second phase, both in substructures and super-structures, it would have kept growing as a class, and as a class form (and capitalism is actually growing in America and Russia), while dreadfully sinking into an inhuman and obscurantist social organisation.

Dictatorship is urgent, because in this world the capitalist society asphyxiates us in its degenerescence, and becomes even more feted, owing to the effect among masses of its school, of its publicity media, and of its conquests shouted from the rooftops.

That could not be understood by the Bauers and Adlers, as well as by all present day hackwriters, and by every poor wretch who now and then falls with them into the sewage.

#### **Universal Conditions**

In the second section, Lenin's work deals with the essential conditions that secured the success in the October revolution to the Russian bolsheviks which will have to take place in **all** European countries, in order to make possible the proletarian seizure of power. We say European because the likely prospects of 1920 were referred to Western Europe; but it may well concern every country of the world, where the proletariat aspires to victory.

Lenin, while he writes, has before himself two historical realisations: seizure of power in October 1917 and victorious defence of it, for two and a half years, from tremendous assaults. These are his words:

«It is, I think, almost universally realised at present that the Bolsheviks could not have retained power for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years, without the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party, or without the fullest and unreserved support from the entire mass of the working class, that is, from all thinking, honest, devoted and influential elements in it, capable of leading the backward strata or carrying the latter along with them.» (op. cit., p. 514) Before Lenin explains the vital necessity of the **discipline** factor, suspected and contested by so many, and defines as befits him the meaning of discipline within both **party** and **class**, we'll quote a period that comes a little further, and that parallels the communist fundamental concept of **discipline** with the other, no less essential, of **centralisation**, keystone of any marxist construction.

«I repeat: the experience of the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has clearly shown even to those who are incapable of thinking or have had no occasion to give thought to the matter that absolute centralisation and rigorous discipline in the proletariat are an essential condition of victory over the bourgeoisie.» (op. cit., p. 514)

Lenin knows that at that time, even in those who defined themselves leftists, hesitations existed upon these two formulae, that always had a very strong bitter taste: «absolute centralisation» and «iron discipline».

The resistance to the above formulae comes from the bourgeois ideology, spread among petty bourgeois, and overflowing from this onto the proletariat; and this is the true danger, against which this classical writing was raised.

The bourgeoisie idealised its tasks in history as a curse on both despotism of absolute monarchies, to which it opposed the **freedom** of the individual citizen in his economical movements, free from the control of the central state, and oppression of consciences from the religious powers, demanding blind obedience,

Bourgeois radicalism had educated to the rhetoric of free thought, and every call for a discipline of ideas was regarded as a return to clerical obscurantism. This capitalist economic organisation, the real step forward of which had been the concentration of scattered productive forces and an actual concentration of power into the State against the centrifugal feudal dispersion, disguised itself under the literature on the autonomy of private enterprises and economical liberalism. All words about centralisation were rejected as a withdrawal from the path towards freedom, and as a betrayal of liberalism; an exacerbation of which was libertarianism, that had enticed some proletarian strata since the nineteenth century.

One of the wrongful reasons that dangerously fostered the suspicion toward the party form, was that the party, by obliging everybody to think in the same way, was a church, and as all decisions come from the centre, it was a barracks. In the nonsenses of this kind, that for decades have disturbed our work, lies the true infantilism against which Lenin moves with no weakness; and against which, with equal energy, the Marxist Left has always fought, especially the Italian one. Yes, - we always said to comrades, maybe more imprudently than the great Lenin, in a way that could be more savagely attacked by generations of philistine henchmen, still alive today, - if I am in the party my personal head and its critical itchings will have to keep quiet seven times a day, and my actions, shall not derive from my personal will, but from the party's impersonal will, as history shows and dictates through such an organism.

From which microphone does such a collective force give its orders? We always denied the presence of the mechanical and formalistic rule: it is not the half plus one having the

right to speak, although such a bourgeois method will be necessary in many situations; and we do not accept, as a metaphysical rule, the «count of heads» within party, trade unions, councils or class: sometimes the decisive voice will come from the unresting masses, at other times from a group within the party structure (Lenin is not afraid to say, as we have seen: oligarchy), or from an individual, from a Lenin, as happened on April 1917 and on October itself, against the opinion of «all».

#### Dictatorship is a War

Ours is above all experimental materialism, and we are led by the lessons of history, Lenin says here. If we have won in Russia, no doubt that such an event followed both acceptance of discipline and use of centralisation: two conditions for the victory of proletarian dictatorship. Total acceptance of **discipline** and **centralisation** can result in the extreme case, where few, or only one, speak and take decisions, while others not completely convinced or resolute, obey and carry out the orders. And thus proceeds revolutionary history.

Let's now see, in a remarkable passage the atrocious contrast between discipline and stupid whim of «I want to think with my personal mind», peculiar to the anarchist individualist; between centralisation and dispersion, autonomy, molecular fragmentation of both economical production and social forms.

«The dictatorship of the proletariat means a most determined and most ruthless war waged by the new class against a **more powerful** enemy, the bourgeoisie, whose resistance is increased **tenfold** by their overthrow (even if only in a single country), and whose power lies, not only in the strength of international capital, the strength and durability of their international connections, but also in the **force of habit**, in the strength of **small-scale production**. Unfortunately, small-scale production is still widespread in the world, and small-scale production **engenders** capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale. All these reasons make the dictatorship of the proletariat necessary, and victory over the bourgeoisie is impossible without a long, stubborn and desperate life-and-death struggle which calls for tenacity, discipline, and a single and inflexible will.» (op. cit., p.514)

In these words, that we left with Lenin's stressings, a succession of notions return, upon all of which we have a duty to dwell, profoundly reflecting, even if we may be considered pedantic.

The revolutionary act, that the anarchist and the infantile revolutionary see as instantaneous, or at least reduced to the proportions of a battle, and that for the bourgeois used to be a general, decisive **uprising**, is instead just the **opening** of a period of social war, the revolutionary dictatorship. The causes of it are of a different nature, firstly internal, national, then international, and finally «social».

First of all, taking the power from the bourgeoisie (if only it were already all monopolistic! then the initial victory would be easier, and the war shorter) does not mean having rooted it out of the economical society. The meaning of the dictatorship is that from that moment on the bourgeois parties are scattered, and the bourgeois have no representation in the

new State, both as a class and as individuals. The meaning of class terror is that they will be given to understand that any attempt to regain political importance will get extermination as a response. But it does not mean that the bourgeois minority will be either eliminated or exiled. In quite a few companies, as during the first years in Russia after 1917, the owner will only be under control, not so much of his workers, as of the proletarian state. An extremely dangerous period, but less dangerous than the total stoppage of physical production: which, according to the libertarian illusion, soon after the **day-long battle** is supposed to be carried on by virtue of the famous spontaneous **association of producers**!

Thus the politically defeated bourgeoisie is even more powerful (Lenin is crystal-clear, and defies the accusation of paradox) and, owing to the several reasons we are patiently listing, ten times more than before! It can now stop a factory of ammunitions, and can cause a defeat at the front, where the armies of other national bourgeoisies are attacking. A factory firing squad will be ready for him: but, even if for him eight bullets will be sufficient, the shot will leave without arms a revolutionary unit.

Reasons of production, not only of foodstuffs but also of arms, make therefore the bourgeoisie dangerous, even after it has been deprived of power, when it cannot yet be deprived of all productive and managerial, technical functions.

## Solidarity of Bourgeoisies

Moreover, there is the difficult international question. We did not make, as we do not for the future, the hypothesis that the bourgeoisie will lose its political power in several capitalist countries on the same day. Should we make such a cunning mistake, we would be victims of the trap of social democrats, who want us to abstain from seizing power «in only one country». It is instead what we will always have to do, as it is the only way for world revolution to historically get started. We'll always bring down the weakest among bourgeois states, and in 1917 such was the very young Russian state, precisely because it was coming from the fall of the feudal regime.

The parenthesis you've read in Lenin means that for us, from the point of view of the «victorious proletarian dictatorship», the **least favourable** situation is when the other states are still in the hands of the bourgeoisie. If in a given historical period some more, neighbouring states would fall, the situation of the victorious communist dictatorship would consistently improve. Such hypotheses appear today abstract, but at that time they were close to being realised. In January 1919 we had all hoped to see the victory of the gloriously attempted spartacist revolution in Germany. In 1919 we fell, after having won, and we fell for mistakes that could have been avoided (hesitations of a demo-libertarian type on dictatorship enforcement), in Hungary. Soon after the same, or almost the same, took place in Bavaria. Lenin speaks because these tremendous moments were then under the very eyes of all Europeans at that time, as he fears further failures if neglects, both in striking and acting, will occur. It must be remembered that in 1920, during the very same weeks of the IInd Congress, the Russian-Polish war was being fought, and we were only a few kilometres from Warsaw. The interposition of the states, rapidly formed after the victory over Germany and Austria, had created a buffer between red Russia and Berlin, Budapest and Munich strongholds, fallen without the chance of getting any help. Had Warsaw been taken, even if through a merely military action, with its strong proletariat and communist party, the program of conquering central-western Europe would have revived in history. But the sharp-eyed bourgeoisie of France supported with its means and with its «heroic» generals the tottering Polish sister, and the revolutionary wave was halted. (Well-known are the polemics between Trotsky and Stalin on the disastrous diversion of the Russian attack from the vital objective of Warsaw. A mistaken telegram can change the history of decades and decades).

What Lenin says in this text is that no unburdening whatsoever came for the first dictatorship of Moscow, that had, alone, overthrown a state bourgeoisie; and that its struggle continued in the worst conditions, because the international factor played a role in strengthening the capital and its international bourgeois connections, as we have read.

Before proceeding to the very important social question, which requires the dictatorship vigour. (obtained through **centralism** and **dictatorship**), it is worth remarking that for Lenin it has never been the matter of the foul phrase: indifference to the internal affairs of foreign countries with a different regime!

All Lenin (and all the revolutionary communists of the time of the IIIrd International formation) worried about was to work on the proletarian power in Russia, and above all on the outstanding teachings that the experience of it had given, by clearly confirming the «rightness of marxist revolutionary theory» (which we'll soon meet), to exert an influence on the internal equilibrium of «other countries», to blow it up, to sweep away their constitutional structure. Lenin here discusses and chooses the means; and he wants to teach us that it would be metaphysical apriorism, not Marxism, to discard some of them on the grounds that they are not beautiful, not elegant, not pleasant, or not clean, as many left wing infantiles were stupidly doing. But, first, the goal must be understood. On certain circumstances, according to Lenin, by working within parliament it is possible to contribute to upset the national equilibrium and the bourgeois constitution. There are not «a priori» reasons to refuse to discuss such a possibility on positive bases; on the contrary, it cannot be excluded that historical situations occur, in which we'll give an affirmative answer. But when one goes to respect and defend the constitutional structure, as well as to urge on masses to perpetuate it, then it is no longer the matter of Lenin's problem: are his **goals** to be reversed and repudiated.

We are not yet dealing with parliamentarism, but we'll have the opportunity of showing the way Lenin faces the problem: in order to have the parliament dead as quickly as possible, is it better to act from the outside or from the inside? We were doubtful about his solution, as he was about ours, but before those who «respect the internal regime and the parliamentary constitution» of Italy, or of any other country, we would have vied with each other to throw fire-balls against such a mob.

The concept, according to which the bourgeoisie is still a powerful enemy after the victory of dictatorship, will be repeated by Lenin word for word in another passage, where he will deal with «compromises». Here are almost the same words:

«After the first socialist revolution of the proletariat, and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in some country, the proletariat of that country remains **for a long time weaker** than

the bourgeoisie, simply because of the latter's extensive international links, and also because of the spontaneous and continuous restoration and regeneration of capitalism and the bourgeoisie by the small commodity producers of the country which has overthrown the bourgeoisie». (op. cit., p. 550)

Thus, when the very modern swines say that Lenin established the theory according to which the country of the isolated, socialist victory must abstain from stirring the revolution in other countries, inviting them to pacifically «exist» with their full capitalist structure, is an answer still necessary? Lenin had already answered forty years ago, with two exact perspectives, of which the one unfavourable to us took place. The good perspective is that the country of socialist political victory succeeds in stirring up the revolution in many foreign countries, with the result that its proletariat from weak would turn up strong against the internal resistances. Otherwise, as according to Stalin, it refrains from fostering the international revolution; in that case, internal mercantilism and small commodity producers spontaneously regenerate internal, social capitalism, and give in to the international bourgeoisie - as they indecently cohabited with it, they may openly join it! - thus shamelessly outraging both the October tradition and Lenin's doctrine.

We, revolutionary communists, have lost the class war; but, if not our organisation of a world party - in conformity with the fears the left expressed in vain to Lenin himself -, the «rightness of our theory» was spared. Those who today vaunt their leninism are at the bottom of the shitty marsh; Lenin remains, as a theoretician of history, high and unsullied.

## The Social Danger

The communist proletariat has won, and its party firmly holds the dictatorship in its hand; but, apart from the danger coming from abroad, even after the victory in the civil war against the white bands, an internal danger remains, on the definition of which Lenin gives an unambiguous formula: small **production**.

In the marxist sense small production is more dangerous than the big one, before and after dictatorship; and the process for which large numbers of small producers succumb can be described by communists to the deluded petty bourgeoisie, but it can be neither opposed nor averted.

On innumerable occasions we have shown the power of such a thesis, not in a few sentences but in all the pages of Marx and Engels.

In Lenin marxist dialectics attains its height, and to follow him is arduous; yet the renegades are not guilty of ignorance, but rather of open scoundrelness. The Italian word **carogna** (carrion - translated in this text as scoundrel), in its proper meaning, indicates the carcass of an animal that cannot be blamed for its stench, of which the animal-man takes care of by means of the most fleeting myth and rite, the burial. But we use the word in its figurative meaning, as good guests of our country's prisons. When in prison, the delinquent does not despise the fellow delinquent, like him wretched, and sees by instinct the victim, making no graded list of iniquities. One category is excluded:

the **scoundrel**, that is the spy, the squealer to the prison-structure that oppresses all, that who for filthy lucre embitters the fate of his mates.

Going back to Lenin's passage, it should be noted that the expression **small commodity producer** has the same value of **member of non-proletarian masses**. When he deals with such a social collectivity (which includes small holding peasants and city craftsmen, and similar forms), Lenin maintains that the revolutionary proletariat must turn them into its allies, and he maintains that not only as regards the phase of the struggle against tsarism, but also for the following one, that of the struggle against the industrial and agrarian capitalist bourgeoisie. But when Lenin speaks about this economical and social type, of this spurious form that is not only present in Russia but also in many other European countries, to different extents but always in a quantitatively considerable size, then he refers to this form as to the greatest **danger** for the already established proletarian dictatorship. As long as such an economical type of small production of commodities, both agricultural and manufactured will be tolerated in the changing society, there will be a base from which inevitably, using the same words of Lenin, capitalism, dictatorship will arise, daily, hourly, through a spontaneous and continuous regeneration.

In which way will the communist dictatorship avoid such a regeneration? Certainly not by exterminating the peasant and artisan strata, or small producers at large, who can statistically be more numerous than the proletariat itself. If the dictatorship cannot physically annihilate the industrial bourgeoisie itself, or either exile it or imprison it, for a given period in which it will still be indispensable for the production, such a period shall be much longer for those classes. Whereas private property will be fairly rapidly abolished in large-size concerns, we will have to tolerate it for a long time in these very small (and not only very small) concerns. About the duration of such phases, and on the error that Stalin made by shortening them in 1928 with the alleged collectivisation and with the extermination of Kulaks, or rich peasants, we already said everything in the many studies of ours on the Russian structure, in the one presently being published (in Il Programma Comunista, summer-autumn 1960), in «<u>Dialogato coi Morti</u>» (1956), and in «L'économie russe de la révolution d'Octobre a nos jours» (1963).

What is then the remedy, wanted and proposed by Lenin, for such a very serious danger, while the proletariat must «coexist» (here unfortunately the term is appropriate) with the classes of small mercantile production? It is for the time being just a party and political remedy; and it is quite unequivocally indicated as **discipline** and **centralisation**. This is what the bolsheviks had opportunely understood, and that made possible their victory in the colossal «manoeuvre» of making use of the hatred of both peasants and some strata of the working petty bourgeoisie against tsarism and against the Russian bourgeoisie, which only a short time before was an ally for them; while assuring nevertheless the hegemonic leadership of the proletariat on such hybrid classes, as well as the supremacy of the communist party, which little by little routed and destroyed the political organisations coming from such strata: the menshevik socialdemocratic party and social revolutionary, populist party, supporters of a non-marxist and non-proletarian formula of the Russian revolution.

It is indubitable that, in non-euphemistic terms, centralisation and discipline mean unequivocal subordination. Small producing classes are subordinated to the proletariat, the hegemonic class in the revolution; and when Lenin speaks of discipline **within the party**, as well as **within the proletariat**, he means that the proletarian class as a whole must submit to the rigorous leadership of its vanguard, organised within the communist political party.

Such a positioning of the party at the summit worried the infantile prejudices that Lenin had to struggle against in this writing. According to such «immediatists» (that we fought in Italy and abroad, then and now, in this post-war period and always), a system of proletarian consultation must give the party its policy, and determine, through a more or less electoral mechanism, its **obedience**; while we maintain that the party must demand such an obedience from the class and from the masses, as only the party can synthesise all the revolutionary historical experience of all times and of all countries. Lenin here shows that the bolshevik party was able to do so, and that's why it **won**, and now points such a **way** to **all** countries.

# A History of Bolshevism

The events did not allow Lenin, in the heated year of 1920, to write the complete history of the bolshevik party, that he indicates as an indispensable source in order to understand how discipline, necessary to the revolutionary proletariat, could be built up. But the ideas he gives are more than sufficient to understand the problem.

The basis of discipline comes in the first place from the «class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard», i . e., of that proletarian minority that gathers in the party; soon after Lenin draws attention to the qualities of such a vanguard with «passionate», rather than rational, words, by pointing out, as shown in many other writings of his (**What is to be done?**») that the communist proletariat joins the party instinctively rather than rationally. Such a thesis had been maintained as far back as 1912 by the Italian socialist youth against the «immediatists» - who always are, like the anarchists, «educationists» -, in the struggle between culturists and anti-culturists, as they were called at that time; whereas it is understood that the latter ones, by requiring of the young revolutionary faith and sentiment rather than school preparation, proved to comply with strict materialism, and with the rigour of party theory. Lenin, who's holding an enlistment rather than an academy, refers to qualities of «devotion, tenacity, self-sacrifice, heroism». We, faint pupils, have recently, with dialectic resolution, dared to openly call a «mystical» fact that of adhering to the party.

This in the first place. Secondly, Lenin requires for this vanguard: »...ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and - if you wish - merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people - primarily with the proletariat, **but also with the non-proletarian masses** of working people.» (op. cit., p.515)

But to link up does not mean that, if the «temperature» of the masses is cold, pacifist, conciliatory, the party must lower itself to that level, as the Tartuffes of opportunism pretend to read here. The meaning of linking up is that the connection of the masses with

the party raises the revolutionary temperature; in fact - as we have many times said, although it's not our discovery -, only by «organising itself into a political party» the shapeless working mass (infected by small production) can be selected into the proletarian **class**. Without the revolutionary party there's no true class, subject of history, and tomorrow of revolutionary dictatorship.

But it is the **third place** that greatly interests us, as an explanation of the first two, from which it cannot be separated:

«Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided the broad masses have seen, from their own experience, that they are correct.» (op. cit., p.515)

We believe the above passage, in connection with many others, fundamental as it establishes what we would call **«theory of rightness**». If the masses must verify, through their own experience within the real historical struggle, the rightness of the revolutionary party strategy, it means that the party, on the path of history, **precedes** the masses.

The party, by virtue of its interpretative theory of past history, enabled itself to foresee to a certain extent the development of history to come, of the class struggles that will follow those of the past in the alternation of social forms. The party foresaw, and in a sense actually foretold, which will be in a crucial phase the thrusts that will sway the masses, and which class, provided with a theory and with a party, will be the protagonist of the struggle. When the above will take place, then even the masses with more blurred outlines will see how the past resolute side was trained in the struggle, and the fact that such a party had rightly foreseen the events, the drawing up of the forces in a general conflict, will get into their experience. Lenin will later show how the Russian peasantry saw since 1905 that the industrial proletarians were at the head of the struggle. When he moves on discussing the fading of the various parties that had tried to theorise the revolution, having in view the attempt to lead it later, he shows how the construction, according to which peasants and small producers at large would have been in Russia the personification of the revolution by becoming its hegemonic class, came to nothing. This was **populism**, the leaning and theoretical aberrations of which date back to old Proudhon, on the one hand, and on the other occur again, imprudently, today, in the last wave of the present day, pro-Russia and pro-Kremlin, opportunism. The peasants themselves realised that even the game of liberation from feudalism would have been lost, had not been ahead of them the far more seasoned workers with their bolshevik party; as the same events had got rid of the mensheviks, it appeared before the eves of the small producers that such parties, not owing to polemical insinuations of communists but de facto, were acting as allies of big production, and of the counterrevolution itself.

Here is an actual example of what is the checking, in the experience of large masses, of the **rightness** of the class revolutionary party's political strategy.

In order to make such a combination of favourable circumstances possible, the party must, as it had to, **have spoken before**, without being, like the petty bourgeois parties, awaiting to see how it turns out, or which move meets with the masses' approval. Party

theory must not only be a scientifical explanation of past events, it must also be a courageous anticipation of future deeds. Masses must experience them, but it is right to say that the party knows them beforehand.

At this point they try to justify the filthy palinody of Stalin, and today his successors, against «the dogmatics, the talmudics», by means of a passage of Lenin, who is supposed to have written in these pages that **theory is not a dogma**; which is understood in the foolish sense that the party must always be ready and prone to change it to create a new one.

#### Theory: The Primary Base of the Party

Whilst quoting almost in full the text of Lenin, it is worth reminding that we are utilising the edition in the Italian language of the **«Selected Works**», edited in Moscow, 1948 (Vol. II, p. 550-612). The events of the past forty years made it difficult to have available one of the original editions of the time, in the various languages; and we believe that not even the readers possess any of them.

The text of the quoted translation, after speaking about the conditions that secured to the Russian bolshevik party the success in establishing the true discipline and centralisation, which we broadly expounded, says:

«On the other hand, these conditions cannot emerge at once.» (Let us stop a little on this incidental thesis, to think of those wandering spirits who, thinking themselves marxists, propose: let us then have a meeting, and found the perfect party, disciplined and centralised! But even the party is the result of history; and such was the central observation of the left in all the Moscow discussions on the party's task and tactics):

«They are created only by prolonged effort and hard-won experience» (even that coming from the scoundrels' deeds); «Their creation is facilitated by a correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement.» (op. cit., p.515)

The opportunists, who understood nothing of Lenin, or who have understood but in many cases make believe they haven't, comment on this passage in the well known way. Theory is never finished, it continuously undergoes changes, and only after the completion of the series of proletarian revolutions it will be scientifically possible to write the doctrine of the anticapitalist revolution. Such an interpretation is not only mistaken, it serves to achieve diametrically opposed results and aims, if compared to those Lenin is resolved upon when he sets to writing this famous **«'Left-wing' communism**». As a matter of fact, they want to establish what follows: in Russia and in Lenin's and bolsheviks' revolutions they shall disappear, and that violent insurrection, dictatorship, terrorism, and the dispersal of the democratic and constituent parliament exerted by the soviet power and by the communist party, will not take place. Lenin intended on the contrary to demonstrate that the Russian revolution has forever destroyed the socialdemocratic

version of the transition from capitalism to socialism, and he showed that those **Russian** peculiarities are **obligatory** for all countries. The «right- wing» traitors of World War I were - we all believed it - out of action once and for all; but Lenin was worrying about the left-wing infantiles, who were saying: Couldn't we make the future revolutions by avoiding, sparing, if not the armed and bloody strife to overthrow the old regime (they did not go that far; but modern scoundrels do), at least the use of a party that despotically silences dissents, centralises everything, and treads the returns of free elections underfoot?

Lenin started his historical analysis of the bolshevik way to revolution with two important facts: discipline and centralisation. He then sought to understand which distinctive features secured such an achievement, and indicated the bonds with masses, historically thrusted toward a revolutionary movement, the passionate devotion of the party vanguard, the rightness of both strategy and tactics, Without all this, he says, there's no true discipline and centralisation, and the revolutionary power, even if seized, is to be lost afterwards. He now enunciates the **conditions for the favourable conditions**, which are a long time of development and the elaboration of the long experience, made easy by (the verb may appear weak, but the meaning is: **made possible only by**) the right revolutionary theory.

Lenin here does not make a statement, he rather demonstrates, and he does so not by philosophising but by explaining facts; he will therefore explain soon after how and why the bolshevik party, the only one in Russia, succeeded in having the right revolutionary theory, and consequently the indispensable discipline and centralisation. He does not want to write: I enunciated the theory thirty years before, and therefore «I made the revolution», as I have been able to direct on it the faith of many others and, finally, of the waiting masses. In this sense, theory is not a dogma: we accept the formula, and wouldn't even dream of changing it with the other one: the party theory is a dogma. But, should the formula become the other one, that the party theory will be tomorrow the most convenient one, coming from the lessons of the presently unknown facts of tomorrow, then we would say that such is the construction of opportunism and not of leninism; and rather than such an opportunist formula we would certainly prefer the one that says: Party theory is to be accepted as a dogma.

What does dogma mean? In its proper sense it means revealed truth, by a supernatural entity, to a man chosen by God, the prophet; and others cannot see it unless they repeat and respect such revealed words. In this sense we are poles apart from any dogmatism, and to enounce this is quite superfluous. The bourgeois themselves, during the historical phase in which they were revolutionary and the churches supported the feudal regimes, boasted their overcoming any sort of dogmatism. But marxists' antidogmatism is radically different from theirs. The bourgeois philosophy counters the acceptation of the religious dogma with the principle of **individual** freedom of judgement; according to such a principle the subject, typically a petty-bourgeois one, boasts that, rather than accepting from the priest his beautiful, ready made and written from the church petty doctrine, he makes it by himself, just with his own brain of a classical «freethinker». We, on the contrary, as we have not been waiting for the truth of divine revelation, we marxists

counter an opposed class truth by means of a **class** truth, and, rather as philosophemes or ideologisms, we see them as arms of the practical and historical class struggle.

On the side of the proletarian struggle is a class party, with a class truth. It is precisely because we don't believe in the bourgeois science, which pretends to be an eternal and definitive victory on the «dogma», that we maintain that only our class truth is «scientifical». It means that the bourgeoisie is unable to achieve the social science, and that only the proletarian revolution and its party can do so, by breaking off with all sorts of bourgeois thought. It is our thesis (but at the right time we'll show it in Marx's and Lenin's works) that such an incapacity for capitalist «civilisation» and «culture» to possess the social and historical science means incapacity towards science at large, towards the knowledge of nature and universe, even in the physical field. Therefore a general yardstick for «science» doesn't exist, by which our conclusions and those of the bourgeois world can be judged. Who believes that is a true khruschevian, a champion of emulation, for the competition for more capital and more technology, cowardly substituted to the civil war.

That is why the bourgeoisie, as far as social and political matters are concerned, turned to the defamed dogma and, especially since it pretends to appear democratic and pacifist, has put back into such a dogma the ingredient God, and the «a priori» moral.

## The Rising of Revolutionary Theory

Marxist theory, that we'll see was not invented by the bolshevik party but rather taken by Western Europe, is the only theory that can explain the future proletarian revolution, and also the only one able to explain the bourgeois revolution, as well as all revolutions; it is politically true for double revolutions, that is the close up revolutions of contemporary history, of which Russia gave the only **victorious** example - although it was not the only **fought** example. Russia gave an earlier fought, and not victorious even in the bourgeois sense, example, with the colossal struggles of 1905, where the proletariat already acted as protagonist.

Under such a circumstance Russian **backwardness**, normally a negative condition, turned into being a favourable one.

If such a picture of historical events is not taken into account, then it's useless to try to read Lenin. It might be inferred exactly the opposite. And whoever reads as a mercenary forger, let him go to hell.

«The fact that, in 1917-20, Bolshevism was able, under unprecedently difficult conditions, to build up and successfully maintain the strictest centralisation and iron discipline» (the dialectical chain is not interrupted) «was due simply to a number of historical peculiarities of Russia.» (op. cit., p.515)

But the **peculiarities of Russia** consisted just of the fact that, owing to the presence of tsarism, exiled revolutionaries acquired Marxism, which got formed in the West, not in books but from the real struggle of masses, These phases of real social struggle are given by the revolutions of the **nineteenth century**. Lenin is about to say it; then the marxist

«theory» of revolution is complete, not just in 1920, when Lenin writes, it was already so in 1871, or rather in 1850, when Marx outlined it.

«On the other hand, Bolshevism arose in 1903 on a very firm foundation of marxist theory. The correctness of this revolutionary theory, and of it alone, has been proved, not only by world experience **throughout the nineteenth century**, but especially by the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia. For about half a century - approximately from the forties to the nineties of the last century - progressive thought in Russia, oppressed by a most brutal and reactionary tsarism, sought eagerly for a correct revolutionary theory, and followed with the utmost diligence and thoroughness each and every «last word» in this sphere in Europe and America. Russia achieved Marxism - the only correct revolutionary theory - through the agony she experienced in the course of half a century of unparalleled torment and sacrifice, of unparalleled revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, practical trial, disappointment, verification, and comparison with European experience. Thanks to the political emigration caused by tsarism, revolutionary Russia, in the second half of the nineteenth century, acquired a wealth of international links and excellent information on the forms and theories of the world revolutionary movement, such as no other country possessed.» (op. cit., p.515)

We resisted the temptation of underlining the fundamental formulae of this passage. The reader is to understand that the experience, sufficient to consolidate forever the theory of revolution, requires a large struggle of masses, but it has been already given by the revolutions of the **nineteenth century**, and it is already definitive by the end of that century. We could quote ten passages of Lenin and Marx in order to establish that even the French revolution of the eighteenth century was an engagement of masses of people by the millions, sufficient to construct straight off the doctrine we're declaring to be immutable since 1848.

Besides, the favourable **peculiarities** of Russia were that, in the first place, in order to achieve the antifeudal and antidespotic revolution, the masses **had to** irresistibly rise to action; then, the mistakes of non-marxist parties led them to terrible disappointments (the Italian Left several times engaged, especially in 1918, before reading Lenin, in the «critique of the other schools» with particular regard to anarchism, syndicalism and factory counciliarism) and defeats of the proletarian struggle; thirdly, it was not the matter of the Asiatic, Mongolian, Cossack circumstances, as our foul adversaries were blathering at the time, but of pure internationalist circumstances; i.e., the ascertainment that the school, the training ground, and, better still, the bloody battlefield of the revolution, are not national, neither Russian or German, English, French or Italian, they are European and, with words that Lenin, impeccable even in the heat, here does not use at random, **of the world**.

The whole text aims to show the greatness of the Russian revolution, not as the formation of a «socialist country» - a miserable formula-, but as a typical demonstration, still unsurpassed, of the universal dynamics of the communist revolution.

#### Theory and Action
The text of Lenin has shown here how the doctrine on which the bolshevik party was founded had a European and world origin, rather than a Russian and local one, and how the spread of such a theory, marxism, **the only right theory** on a world-wide scale, in Russia was favoured by the «emigration» of revolutionaries, as an effect of tsarist persecutions. Around the year 1900 there were, in every city of Western Europe - as well as of other continents -, real colonies of Russian refugees, exiled or emigrated for their political positions, who kept in close contact with the advanced parties abroad, and made important contribution to those parties' activities; in Italy, it is enough to think of Kuliscioff, Balabanoff, and others.

The clash among doctrinal ideologies was in these colonies constant and very lively, and could be continuously compared with the political struggles within the host countries.

Then Lenin moves to describe a phenomenon that, although moving in the opposite direction, is complementary and integrative of the former one. Russia has pumped the theory from the West but, enforcing it with the facts, in the famous «tactics», it rapidly surpassed the teachers, and achieved a tactical experience of its own, which the countries still under bourgeois rule should have taken to heart.

Without falling into oversimplification or schematism, let us follow a little these two opposite flows, which historically failed in fertilising each other, and therefore in giving to the revolution its world victory.

The peculiar conditions of the Russian movement, that enabled it to rapidly and greatly drink deep from the Western revolutionary thought, were the survival of despotism, its resistance against the internal attacks, and the flow of revolutionary vanguards out of Russia.

The peculiarity that allowed the not less rapid accumulation of strategical and tactical experiences goes back substantially to the same cause: last country in Europe, Russia had not yet accomplished its great liberal revolution, that more clearly can be called antifeudal and antiabsolutist. It had in common such a situation, as far as Europe was concerned, only with Turkey, but the latter, although having at that time its capital in Europe, was an Asiatic state.

It was therefore generally expected a political «democratic» revolution to burst out soon in Russia; and that it could not be kept within the incomplete framework of the concession, from the traditional dynasty, of just a parliamentary type constitution.

For quite a time all socialists had believed that such a revolution was to take place in the presence of a far more developed proletarian movement, if compared to those existing in the European countries at the time of the nineteenth century revolutions; and a rapid «grafting» of two consecutive revolutions, the bourgeois one and the proletarian one, could be expected. Marx and Engels had said it openly; in fact, they believed that the tsarist power in Russia was a true European police against the proletariat, and that the Russian liberal revolution would set off the proletarian revolution, not only in Russia, but even in the whole of Europe.

Without (for a while) thinking of what happened afterwards, it is worth remarking that the expectation of the grafting of the two class revolutions into one had not been made then for the first time by marxists. It had been fully theorised for Germany in 1848.

One more remark is important. Lenin is here about to point out that such a «plan» of historical strategy is not only rich of teachings when successful (and he's explaining the only favourable historical example), but even when its outcome is a defeat: he refers to the Russian 1905, but it is clear that it applies to all proletarian defeats, not only to those of 1848 in almost all Central Western Europe, but even to that of Paris Commune in 1871, from which both Marx and Lenin have always drawn great contributions, not just to the doctrine of the workers' revolution, but also to the principles of its strategy and tactics. Even in 1871 the proletariat of Paris attempted what had been already tried in 1830 and in 1848, that was to achieve, under the force of a democratic revolution, and of the fall of a dynastic power, its own class victory.

With the introduction of the above references, always useful although often repeated and universally known, we can read the passage of Lenin, that closes the second chapter, on the conditions that allowed the success of the bolsheviks.

### The Construction of Lenin

«On the other hand, Bolshevism, which had risen on this granite foundation of theory» (we have seen before that he refers to marxist theory, that the text defines as **granite**, i.e., well-established in an unchanged form, and no longer susceptible of any plasticity or **elasticity**, a fashionable term for opportunists, as well as for the defamation of Lenin), «went through fifteen years of practical history (1903-17) unequalled anywhere in the world in its wealth of experience. During those fifteen years, no other country knew anything even approximating to that revolutionary experience, that rapid and varied succession of different forms of the movement - legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms. In no other country has there been concentrated, in so brief a period, such a wealth of forms, shades, and methods of struggle of **all** classes of modern society, a struggle which, owing to the backwardness of the country and the severity of the tsarist yoke, matured with exceptional rapidity, and assimilated most eagerly and successfully the appropriate «last word» of American and European political experience.» (op. cit., p.515-6)

The construction of Lenin, dated 1920, lays its bases on the following two contributions: the West providing the Russians with the theory, and Russia providing «experimental evidence», thus proving the theory as right and granitic, through fifteen years of social convulsions to which immense masses of men of all classes take part; and thus leading, for the first time in history, to the result that the working class establishes its own dictatorship.

The contribution of Russia is not only that of a test field, enabling us to say: our marxist theory proved to be the right one; it is also that of a campaign of social and class war which, having for the first time led to victory as well as confirmed the dialectical lessons

of campaigns followed by defeats, enables us to establish the universal **rules** of our party, strategy and tactics.

They have no right to say that theory can only be established after the victory, being all the previous ones uncertain, and susceptible of transformation. First of all, if it were true, we should still ask those who deviated from Lenin why have they then abandoned the theory, according to which armed insurrection, dictatorship, terror dispersal of parliamentary and democratic organs, are not **local** tactical expedients, but rather cornerstones of both doctrine and programme, valid, **obligatory**, for **all** countries.

When Lenin wrote the famous sentence, that theory is not a dogma, he did not mean that the theory, before October 1917, was a blank page, let alone that it would become such afterwards, at the disposal of Stalin's and Khruschev's wills. Lenin only meant to say that the theory did not arise (as it is the case of the dogma, based on a text that has been revealed by the divinity to an exceptional or chosen man) from the discovery of an author, or a clever leader, it could only arise after, through the **effect** of, and owing to **the lessons** of large historical movements of **immense masses**; and that such lessons can be learnt only outside the old class and school prejudices.

Now, in a sense for the first time in human history, the revolutions caused by the capitalist bourgeoisie have taken the shape of not passive, but rather **active** movements and thrusts of immense masses. The French revolution was fought by all, maybe a bit less by bankers and industrialists, by the «economy operators» of that time. Peasants, serfs, villagers, students, intellectuals, poets, workers of the early manufacturers, made up the ranks of the revolutionary war: the proletariat was born already in both industry and agriculture, but did not become imbued with only bourgeois ideology, it also tested the first attacks on the newborn ruling class, and although in extremely vanguard groups, followed the raw, as well as great, communism of Babeuf and Buonarroti.

The discovery of Marx is bound to the historical experience of the struggle of very large masses within the bourgeois revolution, and to the statement, made possible only by that wave of historical deeds, that the revolution was not to be theorised in the way it theorised itself, but in a new way. The doctrine of the proletarian revolution is dialectically constructed at the same time of the construction of that of the bourgeois revolution, but opposed to it; because the illuminist forerunners of the 1789 revolution introduced their doctrine - no matter if they acted in good or bad faith - as the liberation of the whole of mankind, and they were not aware of its class nature.

Nothing would be left of our centuries-old construction of history (or it would just keep an incomparable «artistic» value, for its harmony and consistent completeness) if it were not true that the first class to possess the key of history is the modern proletariat, and that it does not grasp it when victorious in its titanic and world-wide struggle, but, on the contrary, since its birth and since its first tests in its early struggles; which it carries out, owing to an historical necessity, not for itself but for the class of its exploiters that, as a battering-ram, will clear its shining path.

Whoever wants it, we're saying it as we'll repeat it countless times, can get rid of both Marx and Lenin, subordinating their splendid pages to the idiotic superstition of hindsights; but those who deny that in Lenin and for Lenin the theory was engraved in a granite block since the 1st International of the proletariat constructed it on the lessons coming from the struggles of waves of men, that took place in the first half of nineteenth century in Europe, they are just scoundrels, not contradictors, and do not belong to the class. As it is thanks to such a lesson that Lenin and his party were able to describe, before it actually occurred, the most glorious deed of man's social drama, the Russian October revolution.

### **Tactics and History**

The party doctrine, the programme, establish the goal of our struggle, as well as the fundamental stages it will have to go through in the course of its development. Are therefore doctrinal and programmatic cornerstones: the armed insurrection against the established state, the destruction of its power and administration machinery, the dispersal of democratic parliaments, the proletarian dictatorship, and consequently the hegemonic function of the working class within the society, above and against all other classes, the primary function of the political party in all these stages of the great course of events; are likewise part of such a body of fundamental points the social characters of the communist structure, as well as those of the bourgeois structure, which will be uprooted at the right time by the revolution, up to the classless and stateless society.

In order to go through this succession of stages, both the party and the proletariat must make use of the right means. Before the revolutionary phase peaceful propaganda and still unarmed agitation (and even, in due moments and places, the participation to organs of the bourgeois society such as parliaments and the like) are quite permitted and provided for, as means and methods of large-scale employment. Of course, their use cannot and must not contradict the programme's stages.

The never-ending dispute among parties, currents, tendencies, often within the same party, that occurred between the last two centuries, has always fallen into the misunderstanding of relying on a careful choice of means, rather than that of the tasks to be achieved. In this lies the whole revisionism and opportunism.

Bernstein, against whom Lenin throws himself here and everywhere, dictated the formula according to which the end is nothing, the movement is all. At first sight, such a formula appears just cynical, Machiavellian; it seems to say that all the means are good but, as far as the final aims are concerned, we know nothing, and it is up to the future to show them to us. But opportunism was to soon unmask and expose itself to a greater extent. Although always agnostical about purposes and final aims, it made a place list of means, and choose among them: some good, some bad. The question of principle, worth nothing for it as far as the programme was concerned, was introduced for the tactical choices. Lenin did not say: it is decent to choose as one pleases. Lenin was on the contrary the one who forever exposed the scoundrels, by showing how the traitors used to choose the **means** in order to better serve the **principles** that suited the counterrevolution. Before Lenin, the revisionist, the reformist was the one who wanted to proceed always more slowly. By him, and by ourselves, his last pupils, such people were called reactionary, i.e. conservatives and restorers of the bourgeois power.

The distinction among tactics was the same as that today openly made by the parties of all countries that tail behind Moscow; yes to peaceful propaganda, no to armed struggle, neither today or ever. Yes to democracy, no to dictatorship, neither today or ever (a pardon for Lenin and October; that little man, that incident!). Yes to elections and constitutions, no to parliaments dissolution, and (always) neither today, or tomorrow, or ever.

Lenin here says, in his long list of antitheses, that in those fifteen years - with ten parties and many more sub-parties, as from the historical view of the fourth chapter - all «means» were brought into play and underwent a test, from the fabian pietism (let us put it down as the **last word** from the West) to the dynamite attack. He certainly says more: i.e. almost all, if not all, those means brought into play that have been listed were experienced by the bolshevik party itself, as in those fifteen years that party went through one hundred and eighty years of history (a little further he'll say: «one month counted at that time for one year»).

The sense of the work of Lenin, at the eve of the study on the tactical arsenal of international communism was this: there are historical stages that can be discarded **on principle**, but there are no tactical means to be discarded **on principle**. We can say that only our left has demonstrated, after forty years, of having assimilated and appropriated such an antithesis.

### Last Words from the West

Twice, in two consecutive paragraphs, Lenin used the expression that in Russia they were informed, as to the mentioned ebbs and flows, of the last words of the European, and American, experience.

We should not forget that Lenin was a first-rate polemicist, as well as ironist, writer. The polemical wave that was befalling him - that in those great years we believed to have rejected and exposed forever - played upon the usual chief argument: in Russia you were **backward** (with a modern expression, a depressed area), and you should have been quiet, humble and well-behaved; at the most you were free to initiate and reproduce our past great democratic and liberal revolutions; but, as regards the proletarian and socialist movement, you had no permission to move; you should have first waited for our **experience** of progressive, developed, advanced countries (all of them imbecile expressions, that we despised, both then and today, as stupidly posing admiration for a capitalism that half a century ago had already done all it could as regards economy, society, technology and science; and, as to the rest, wherever it spread it could only bring oppression and ignominy), and **then** you would have learnt how is the way to socialism in mature countries (for us, already disgusting and rotten in their decomposition), to bow and imitate, when your turn comes, such a way.

The barefacedness of our adversaries was that they used marxism as a demonstration of this alleged hierarchy and chronology of revolutions, while they were ordinary **immediatists**, and belonged to the crowd of barterers of principles, at whom Marx and Engels had for decades lashed out.

To this was connected the ingenuity of the young Gramsci who, as a good idealist, rejoiced because Lenin had been able to violate the rule of marxism (as him too, heedlessly, saw in that way the bolsheviks' success).

When Lenin says that the «last words» of the West had already been transferred, utilised and weighed up in Russia, he's answering that there's no «culturist» need to take further lessons from Europe or America, in order to entitle Russia to become the vanguard; provided the right materialist and dialectical position on the **model** question, on which, under his direction, we go started in these pages.

Lenin does not therefore make here a concession to the concept of bringing up to date according to the modern and recent results, stupid fashion of the immediatist pettybourgeois thought, but rather a courageous statement, i.e., all the good things worthy of being learnt, bolsheviks knew them already, and they were mature enough, with their followers of all countries, the left-wing marxists, and able to pontificate and to dictate the norms.

The petty-bourgeois thought's immediatist infection (same as infantilism for Lenin) consists exactly in the obsession for the latest fashion, for the most recent patent, for the last brain-wave.

In the years that preceded the historical epoch we're dealing with, the revolutionary syndicalists of Sorel's school, widely represented in latin Europe (in Italy by Arturo Labriola, Orano, Olivetti, Leone, de Ambris, etc.), and even in Northern America by the trade union movement of I.W.W., who opposed the reformist and bourgeois General Confederation of Labour, set themselves up as repository of the latest fashion. It seemed to be at the moment the last word. But the Bolsheviks did not make such a mistake, however enticing could be the slogan of that school, if compared to those of the revisionist socialists. They followed the model of the left wing of German social-democracy (that name, as suggested by Marx and Engels, was to be abandoned by the revolutionary class party), and before the First World War events (when nearly all sorelian were wrecked) they were close to Kautsky, an outstanding marxist at the beginning of the century.

How did the **last word** people think? In accordance to the immediatists, infantile outlook; that is, they put the tactical means in the place of programmatic cornerstones.

As, like all radical bourgeois, they were at heart real progressists and evolutionists, they listed the «new courses» that in their mind had occurred in history. The pattern was of this kind: the French revolution gave rise to the political **club**, which originated the parties. The proletarian movement passed from the small clubs of conspirators to the big electoral parliamentary parties, boasting, as in Germany (they accused of it the very consistent, revolutionary Engels!), to be able to achieve a peaceful seizure of power. But the masses saw that the party form inevitably degenerates toward the right, and moved to a solely economical form of organisation, the trade union. They replaced elections by general strike and direct action, i.e., by the struggle with no intermediation of the party, which comprises (according to the clever formula of Marx) men of all classes. Since then political parties, for that people, have been of no use for the proletariat.

The Russian bolsheviks avoided such a mass of enormous historical and falsely revolutionary mistakes for two reasons: their connection with originary classical marxism, that sorelians and the like tried to attack in its fundamental doctrine, and the Russian experience, that had already shown the inconsistency of such petty-bourgeois attitudes in the deeds of nihilists, anarchists, bakuninists and populists. As Lenin here recalls, in the course of a preliminary ideological struggle (in his construction such a contrast shows, ahead of time, the future engagement of acting masses) bolshevik marxists had already dealt with «economists», «legal marxists» and «liquidators» who, by converging on an error that wasn't new, as in a sense its German example was already in Lassalle, timely exposed by Marx, maintained that both the political struggle and the party, which was running up against the tremendous tsarist state structure, were to be liquidated, and that an economical struggle of the industrial workers against capitalists, taking no interest in the antitsarist revolution, should be set off .

As from Lenin's passage, both doctrine and history had taught bolsheviks the right revolutionary way. Their ideology and activity were able to take and fill all forms, the small group and the huge crowds, the trade unions' as well as the parliamentary work, even within the reactionary Duma, both the secret conspiracy and the insurrectionary general strike; but they kept their positions of principle: never set aside the question of the state, whether it is still feudal, or already bourgeois; never put in a secondary place the party form; understand that the general strike is revolutionary as far as it is no longer economical and becomes political, and is personified by both the revolutionary party and the trade unions, rather than by the latter alone; and the masses' social struggle itself would not lead to call in the historical question of power, if the masses and the industrial working class itself could not have the political party as the protagonist.

# The Italian Left

The effect of historical circumstances led the left wing of the Italian socialist party to positions that show a broad analogy with those just described for the Russians and explains why, not certainly by virtue of a mere careful reading of texts or of the existence of efficacious readers, a defence was built up against the influences of immediatism-infantilism, those that worried Lenin.

About 1905 in Italy, the field of tendencies within the socialist movement, with the exception of union groups and currents that soon disappeared from the struggle without leaving any remarkable trace, appeared clearly divided in two, between reformists and revolutionary syndicalists. The latter, after all in a way consistent with their ideology, ended up by splitting from the party, concentrating their action in the Unione Sindicale Italiana and getting organised, without an out and out national network, in «syndicalist groups», which hybridly concealed their political nature, as they asserted to be non-party organisms, as well as non-parliamentarian and non-electionist. Such an agnosticism would not prevent them from having in certain areas fairly odd electoral experiences, as they went as far as making popular coalitions in the administrative elections.

On the other side, the party moved more and more to the right, and was run by open reformists, who leaned to what at that time was called «possibilism», i.e., participation to bourgeois cabinets, as from previous examples in France. They didn't go that far in Italy, but the reformist leaders predominated within the party's parliamentary group and within the Confederazione Generale del Lavoro, that consisted of the majority of economical organisations, adopted more than minimalist tactics and abhorred open struggles and strikes.

It was then clear in Italy, for an orthodox marxist current within the party, that the two above tendencies, apparently engaged in a decided conflict and in fierce and defamatory polemics, had on the contrary many aspects in common; which were the negative aspects, that reduced the efficiency of the class struggle of a proletariat which, both in industry and in agriculture, was being fiercely exploited by the sinister national bourgeoisie.

Like the Russians, Italian marxists avoided the mistaken anti-these: party and class collaboration versus trade union and class struggle. The trade union organisational form was not less, but rather more than any other, accessible to the deviation from both class struggle and revolutionary action; what's more, parliamentary reformism lived on the trade unions network, which in turn needed political lawyers within the bureaucratical network of bourgeois cabinets.

Trade unionism is not at all free from the disease of compromise among classes, which from its structure may easily catch on within the party. The solution is not to choose one or the other organisational network, and therefore the victory over reformism could not be expected from the side of sorelian and anarchist syndicalists of the Unione Sindacale. In Italy, before the war, a man who certainly didn't lack intelligence and culture (and who would not have been frightened, later on, by the dictatorship formula), Antonio Graziadei, theorised what at the time seemed, and was not, a contradiction in terms: reformist syndicalism.

On the other hand the formula was born within the English movement with the Labour Party, the membership of which is mainly composed by the Trade Unions; and it is at their service that it carries on its parliamentary activity, as well as, unhesitatingly, its governmental action.

Every pure - in its organisational form - labourism is susceptible to degenerating into class collaborationism; and another point that was not quite clear in Italy, with the exception of the best marxist current, is that salvation is not in the devising of another **immediate** form: the factory council.

The perspective of **ordinovism**, which ductilely camouflaged itself in a follower of leninism and of the October revolution, was originally to weave all over Italy the councils' system, «immediately» in accordance with the structure of capitalist manufacturing companies, and to replace with it the reformist Confederazione del Lavoro. The critique of the socialist party, as regards to its negative part, was correct, but it was lacking of the idea of founding the revolutionary party, because substantially the system, the **councils** movement, was one more surrogate of the party, as usual a **new recipe** for a **new course**. An old, but immortal, illusion!

At the first news about October, those who were only superficially informed about Marx and just journalistically acquainted with Lenin, saw the soviets as the same «patented invention».

But if we follow the pages of Lenin's writing - or, better, neither words nor pages, which would be nothing, but rather the true lesson of the historical facts of October revolution then we can draw those theses that the Italian Left has considered as its own for half a century. The fundamental form for the class revolution is the political party, as the insurrectionary struggle for power is political. The boycott of reformist-led traditional trade unions is a mistake, as indeed had been shown by the «Western experience» of the failure of «extreme» syndicalists in France and Italy, who rejected the party form. A similar mistake would be the abandonment of the trade union form for the new form, the factory council. Further on Lenin explains that another mistake would be to take the soviet (an openly political organ, when it was understood what it was, and not a system connected to production, as immediatists believed) as a replacement of the political party. A little further Lenin will say that the bolsheviks launched with a great care the formula all power to the soviets, as a Soviet government with a menshevik or populist majority would be a non revolutionary formula; what's more, it would be a non revolutionary fact, because «no organisational or constitutional formula is in itself revolutionary». The bolsheviks waited until they had the soviets in their hands, and then they set off the insurrection, because the content of their agitation, apart from all verbal formulae, actually was: all power to the communist party. It is not the matter of double-faced tactics, but rather of a continuous line, conceived before the event with a unique clarity in history: on July 1917 soviets are mostly opportunist, and Lenin (was he then a pompier?) curbs the revolution. In October the time is ripe, the soviets have moved to the left, then it will be possible, by using them as a platform, to wipe out the elected constituent assembly; and Lenin invokes the break out of action, against the party's Central Committee itself (all formulist philistines are ready to say: against the party and its legal hierarchy); and harshly calls traitor whoever proposes the slightest delay.

Before closing this Italian interlude, we'll recall that before the war the Marxist Left had sensed that the two ways, of reformists and syndicalists, were both theoretically wrong, and had taken the right position for the revolutionary party. Before the war such a formula was only, insufficiently, expressed by the electoral intransigence, but at the eve and during the war (1914-18) it served to spare the Italian party the ignoble end of the big parties of Western Europe.

Since the pre-war congresses the left in Italy did not confine itself to denying class collaboration in parliamentary politics, it also stated the terms of the question **of the state**. We were against reformists, because they believed possible a peaceful conquest of the democratic state; and we were against the anarcho-sorelians because, although they correctly wanted the destruction of the bourgeois state apparatus, they refused to admit the function of a proletarian state, as come from the insurrection. Although such a problem was not demanded by neither necessity or tactics, it arose, as for the bolsheviks in 1903, in the theory, as a correct application of economical determinism to the correct expectation of the transition from capitalism to communism; direct and «instantaneous», in its military sense, as regards its political side; complex in its social development, as far

as the economical transformations are concerned, which is to be a function of the whole course, a very backward in Russia, semi-modern in Italy and very modern, for example, in England.

This is the essence of «'Left-wing' communism».

# Chapter IV: The Historical Run of Bolshevism

### The Revolutionary Formation

Lenin outlines, in his third chapter, a brief history of the developments that enabled the bolshevik party to direct its action on the path to revolution. A similarly rapid look at this resume enables us to belie the same old legend, i.e., that events and masses' fever had revealed an unexpected way to the party, and given for the first time a previously ignored key of revolutionary history, which could be handled, from the moment of victory on, in all other countries. Unfortunately militant opportunism has already deserted this position, to adopt a far more cowardly one, i.e., that Lenin, bolshevism and the October tradition must be considered as small idols, while their Word, which would have allegedly revealed itself in Russia for the first time, should no longer be announced in other countries.

The work of Lenin seems specially written to answer such a forgery. The real reason that will make the fundamental lines of the development that led to the victorious October 1917 a character of the proletarian struggle in all countries, is that they did not arise as an unexpected miracle in Russia; on the contrary, they strictly confirmed the forecasts of a universal doctrine of proletarian revolution, on which, half a century after its historical formation, Russian revolutionaries had successfully drawn. There were peculiar conditions of Russia, as shown by the following events, unfortunately adverse; but it is to point out the common features of the Russian revolution and of all revolutions, that Lenin writes, and fiercely fought for all his life.

Lenin starts with 1903, as in that year the bolshevik party split from menshevik socialdemocracy, which was tailing after the European revisionism of those marxists who wanted to change the revolutionary foundations of both doctrine and action of the international proletarian party; as it was, since that year, quite distinct from all other parties within the opposition to tsarism - although they were revolutionary parties, in the antifeudal sense -, it influenced the real situation and was influenced by it, in a quite original way, drawing quite different conclusions on the efficiency of the position of all other parties. To bolshevism, October meant confirmation and victory, to all others, denial and defeat.

Then, when it was 14 years to the revolution, Lenin's party had already learnt the main lines leading to the historical victory, and it was not the latter to teach them and to build up a theory; as it was only a verification, a grandiose and glorious one, but still a verification of a **pre-existing** doctrine, a disastrous and mortal one for all adversaries' doctrines.

#### **Preparation and First Revolution**

Everybody has the presentiment that the revolution against the despotic power of tsars and of feudal nobility is near. The situation is revolutionary for all classes of Russian society and for their «spokesmen»: the political parties and their groups working within the émigrés abroad.

The ideological struggle among the various contending classes occurs therefore before the armed struggle which is to take place in the years 1905-1907, and in 1917-192O, as stated by Lenin. The theoretical arms are therefore formed before the encounter of social forces; this is the general meaning of the historical materialism and of class struggle, valid for all class revolutions and not only for the anticapitalist one.

Whoever believes that from the course of class wars it is possible to draw their theoretical and ideological expression, is actually reversing marxism. Each class has a revolutionary ideology long before fighting for the seizure of power; even the proletarian class starts its struggle, first as a political action and agitation, and then as an insurrectional battle; its advantage, if compared to the previous revolutionary classes, is to have, in its political party, the right doctrine of the historical course, as well as the right explanation of the struggles of other classes, which interpreted them in a wrong way. The bourgeoisie, before its revolution, already had a critical and cultural blossoming on the end of feudal and clerical monarchies; but, within such a perspective, the view according to which the coming of democratic freedom would put an end to both class struggles and social inequalities was a false one; the French revolution itself, which was a «simple» and not a «double» revolution, like the Russian, gave a chance to the party of the new proletarian class, the fourth estate (when immense crowds were being mobilised), to set up the new doctrine, that is the new view of the development of historical future.

Lenin describes the various Russian classes: liberal bourgeoisie, town and country pettybourgeoisie (concealed by the label of «socialdemocratic» and «social- revolutionary» trends, as Lenin says) and revolutionary proletariat, as represented by the bolshevik party, let alone the «countless intermediate forms».

The polemical wiggling of those tendencies gives us an anticipated photographic image of the future open struggle among them; therefore, it was not the struggles and their aspects to give to each group the historical formula they were to follow. If anyone doubts that such was Lenin's thought, let's read:

«Abroad, the press of the political exiles discussed the theoretical aspects of **all**» (italics in the original) «the fundamental problems of the revolution.» (op. cit., p. 516).

The trends we mentioned

«anticipated and prepared the impending open class struggle by waging a most bitter struggle on issues of programme and tactics.» (op. cit., p. 516)

# And

«All the issues on which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905-07 and 1917-20 can (and should) be studied, in their embryonic form, in the press of the period.» (op. cit., p. 516)

The author insists on this concept:

«It would be more correct to say that those political and ideological trends which were genuinely of a class nature crystallised in the struggle of press organs, parties, factions and groups, the classes were forging the requisite political and ideological weapons for the impending battles.» (op. cit., p.516)

We're now making use of the already mentioned texts, edited in 1920, one in French and one in German, that we received from comrades who answered our appeal. For instance, in the above mentioned passage, after the words; «the impending open class struggle» the recent stalinian translation lacks of the sentence: **and give anticipated portrayal of it**. Lenin therefore believes that, like the trend polemics in the years before, the struggles would display a **dress rehearsal** of the revolution.

Here is the other side of «concretism», warning: first see what's happening, then dare to speak. One more step, and the renown double-dealer comes up: You'll be able to see who's the strongest, and to swear that you've always been speaking like him, when you were busy with..., saying nothing.

Lenin's position is therefore the opposite of the old commonplace, that contrasts the polemics of opposite doctrines with action: Do not waste time to write, to polemise, and to split into grouplets; let us enter the streets battlefield, and we'll learn everything!

Lenin's, and ours, conclusion can be formulated as follows: the opportunist is the one for whom theory follows action, while for the revolutionary theory comes first.

#### The First Test

«The years of revolution (1905-07). All classes came out into the open.» (op. cit., p. 516)

Here is why the lesson of masses' action is necessary:

«All programmatical and tactical views were tested by the action of the masses.» (ibid.).

What is the meaning of this **test**? That the masses, in an objectively ripe situation (as was exactly that of a regime which had disappeared everywhere in Europe since half a century and, what's more, which was coming from a disastrous war with Japan, therefore being into a total economical and political crisis), **choose the direction of that party**, **the forecasts of which are best suitable to the thrust that moves them**.

Lenin points out one of the original features of an antidespotic revolution where, owing to an advanced development of capitalist production, is present, especially in big cities, a true proletariat. For the first time it is not the matter of fights on barricades of a shapeless people, but to resort to the strike («In its extent and acuteness, the strike struggle had no parallel in the world.»). The strike was the lesson given by Western Europe workers; but from Russia the lesson comes back more than strengthened. The factory economical issue is no longer the goal of the strike; it is the new formula, that left-wing marxists had supported for a long time, to prevail: «The economic strike developed into a political strike, and the latter into insurrection.» (ibid.).

In 1905 in Europe the Sorel-style revolutionary syndicalists, which we already mentioned before, were championing the general strike as the highest form of the proletarian struggle, as a revolutionary expression of class «direct action», where workers would act in person, with no representatives or intermediaries; which for them were not only the socialist M.P.s, but even the socialists **parties** themselves. Such an attitude was to be considered as extremely defeatist, but it was somehow justified by the behaviour of the socialist parties of the time, which opposed strikes, deprecated the general strike and were against its use.

How superior was the position of the Russian proletariat, which had not only learnt from the example of the workers' masses of countries with a far more developed and less young industry, but which had also been following, since then, a revolutionary political party that had been able to put itself at the centre and at the lead of the colossal strikes of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odessa, Warsaw, etc. It is evident that nobody could then deny the political content of the strike and of the struggle as a whole, which was opposed by the tsarist police with its exterminating massacres. Political strike; insurrectional strike; strike led by a revolutionary party: here is the **test** not just of merely Russian polemics, but of polemics extended to the entire Europe.

The dialectical interpretation of the Russian situation was of course so powerful as to allow the connection between the revolutionary and class war nature of the proletarian line and the overthrowing, not only of a despotic regime, but even of a western-type, liberal bourgeois one.

That is what left wing marxists in Europe was asserting, and that were evident after the great October victory in Russia.

Our text keeps showing the significance of the immense, historical, «test». It proceeds in great laps.

«The relations between the proletariat, as the leader, and the vacillating and unstable peasantry, as the led» (by the former), «were tested in practice». (ibid.)

Another great lesson of the Russian revolution is the dominant role of highly populated cities, which place themselves at the head of the revolution, because there lives the great industrial proletariat. It is the lesson of Europe's 1846, when Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Milan and so on rose up in arms. But at that time in the cities, together with the not yet united and mature workers (as they would become in the course of the second half of the century), intellectuals, students, etc., were participating to the struggle, and the doctrine of the proletariat as the hegemonic class was not yet completed. Provinces and peasantry slowly followed, when they didn't actually give rise to Vandees. But as regards the theory of the agrarian question and the agrarian tactics, the Italian example was in the mind of Lenin, who eagerly relied on proletarian peasants long before than on «poor» peasants, which has been hard to understand for many.

In Lenin's theses the poor peasant is not so much the owner of a little land (with far worse conditions of life, then, if compared to the city's wage labourer), as it is chiefly the rural wage labourer, which in Russia was present in a relatively small number. There were countries, among which the Italian situation was typical, where the labourer with no land, the pure farm-hand, not only statistically prevailed in number on all other strata of the agrarian population, it also had a first-rate tradition of class struggle, not inferior to that of urban labourers. Italy had already given the example of great general political strikes, in which the country-side had played a non-secondary role if compared to the cities, and ere the farm labourers had fought with great and memorable revolutionary spirit. Fascism was a movement of rural petty-bourgeoisie, hired by the bourgeois state, and of the big rural and urban bourgeoisie, set up to destroy the organisations of farm labourers, first, and then those of urban workers, The former were not certainly less combative than the latter; but strategic reasons, of a class war where the bourgeoisie took the initiative of using state military forces, made it possible to attack the rural reds with smaller groups than in the cities, by concentrating squads of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois youth, supported by state detachments, against a little populated district, its proletarians, its workers' associations. In view of the unfavourable conditions in which it was carried on, the history of rural proletarian defence is simply heroical; and urban proletarians vielded after a smaller resistance only owing to the lack of a nationwide organisation of the struggle, thanks to the sabotage of both rightists and centrists of the political movement.

This is not a digression from the subject, as this very text is there to show us how to draw lessons from a defeat. But they are instead drawn in contrast with the historical facts, and in contrast with Lenin's teaching, when the scoundrels of social-communist parties aim at deproletarising the farm-labourers, and place before their interests those of small holders, tenants and share-croppers, not just the poor and semi-poor ones, but even the middle and rich strata; that is, of those strata that provide effectives for fascist squads, although big bourgeoisie swindled them by means of fascism, and will swindle them today by means of the social-communist betrayal of the revolution.

We want it to be clear that the classical formula of Lenin: **the proletariat as the leader, and the vacillating, unstable peasantry, as the led**, has the rural labourers within the revolutionary, leading vanguard, rather than within the vacillating and unstable mass. If the vanguard has a party that does not betray, then the vacillating mass will move to the side of the revolution; but if the party betrays or fails, then it will make the opposite oscillation, and will fall under the fascist or democratic influence, which in both cases means that it will be dominated by the counterrevolutionary capitalist bourgeoisie.

#### **Political Organs of the Revolution**

The whole text is to be read while bearing in mind that its aim is to put the contributions of the Russian **test** at the service of the western revolution. It answers the question: are the famous **soviets** or workers' and peasants' councils, which appeared in the course of 1905 revolution and were the protagonists of the 1917 bolshevik revolution, a merely Russian form, or are they of such a nature as to be applicable in all countries? The first answer could be founded on the Russian situation in those years, with a minority of industrial proletarians and a large majority of peasants; but the position of Lenin is quite

dialectical. If in such a situation the revolutionary function of soviets was secured by the presence of the revolutionary class party, which conquered the soviets against the opportunists and led the insurrection as well as the proletarian power, that's all the more reason why such a course is more favourable in the west, where peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie have a smaller social importance (although not negligible); the above on the condition that the revolutionary marxist party defeats, within the revolutionary organisations, the opportunists whose function in the first war was to yoke the semiproletarian strata, thus enfeebling the true proletariat itself, to the national, bourgeois cart (and what else are the opportunists doing, in their spreading that took place after World War II?).

The short sentence of Lenin is the following:

«The Soviet form of organisation comes into being in the spontaneous development of the struggle. The controversies of that period over the significance of the Soviets anticipated the great struggle of 1917-20.» (op. cit., p. 516-7)

In order to clearly understand that we did not end up, and that we shall not end up, **with** a utopian faith in the «new form», similar to the watchword «the soviet is always right», we will quote, before the indispensable explanation, another passage, that comes in the following pages:

«As history would have it, the Soviets came into being in Russia in 1905; from February to October 1917 they were turned to a false use by the Mensheviks, who went bankrupt because of their inability to understand the role and significance of the Soviets; today the idea of Soviet power has emerged **throughout the world**» (underlined by Lenin) «and is spreading among the proletariat of all countries with extraordinary speed. Like our Mensheviks, the old heroes of the Second International are everywhere going bankrupt, because they are incapable of understanding the role and significance of the Soviets.» (op. cit., p. 519)

On the other hand, when Lenin dealt with the second revolution (February to October 1917), he said:

«In a few weeks the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries thoroughly assimilated all the methods and manners, the arguments and sophistries of the European heroes of the Second International, of the ministerialists and other opportunist riff-raff.» (ibid.)

Why then shouldn't the heroes of today's shipwreck raft of the IIIrd International **go likewise bankrupt**, after having relegated to Russia the historical function of soviets, while worshipping in the west that of parliaments, ready to be nominated ministers by them, as often happened? All this is so evident that our commentary on soviets, in Lenin's thought is barely necessary,

It is known that of the first quoted sentence, on the coming into being of the soviet from the **spontaneous** development of the struggle, is made use to depict Lenin as the theoretician of «spontaneity»; in keeping with it, the communist party should just wait for **the masses** to discover or invent the forms of the revolution, without daring to foresee them in advance.

Such a banality recalls on the one hand the way of thinking of the most fierce enemies of Lenin (who lashes them even here), the revisionists, who did not want to speak of ends, but only of the movements as an end in itself, or which chooses its own goals in an unexpectable way; on the other, that of idealists like Gramsci, who saw Lenin throwing away the marxist determinism and inventing new forms!

Soviets, it may be said, had not been prophesised by any theoretician; they are not in Marx's books, nor had Lenin pointed out at them. But this sophism consists in the ignorance of the function and «international» importance of the soviets, that Lenin attributes to mensheviks and centrists (a little further he will attack the idealists, seeing them as the left-wing infantiles; and it is worth remarking that Italian left-wingers had defended at every step both materialism and determinism).

#### Form and Content

The soviets are the organisational form of the proletarian power, and they can also be termed as the constitutional form of the proletarian state. The theory of the revolution is not only indispensable, it also existed in the terms that Lenin here vindicates. It would be utopian to describe the organisational **forms** of the future society, of the future state; we are within the theory of scientifical communism when we describe the **forces** of the revolution and their connections, which are economical, social and political connections among classes. The workers' and peasants' council form can't be found among the principles of doctrine, which is for Marx and Lenin indispensable to the party of the revolution; but within the soviets are the non-capitalist characters of the revolutionary society, the characters of the clash among classes: class struggle, insurrection, dictatorship, terror.

Theory, as Lenin above all vindicated, had clearly written this; but it had not the right to write the **constitution** of the new state. Both theoretically and in principle, the established state, in our meaning, is an indispensable as well as temporary weapon of history, like classes and the organisational class forms (trade unions, soviets); only the political party, presently a class organ, can be considered eternal, as an organ of mankind. The party is defined by its **content**, that is the historical doctrine and the revolutionary action; the other organisations are defined by their **form**, and can be filled with various **contents**.

Which are then the theses that Lenin turns into an extraordinary synthesis?

1. The Russian struggle historically revealed the soviet form in 1905.

2. Revolutionary marxists saw the soviet as the organ of proletarian power; opportunists on the contrary tried to subordinate it to themselves, succeeding in it in many times and places, in order to empty it of its content and to maintain that it was to disappear after the struggle, or that it could coexist in a democratic republic beside an elected parliament.

3. The formula **«all power to the soviets**» must not be launched as long as they are in the hands of mensheviks or the like, but only when it leads to the **power of the communist party**.

4. (IInd Congress). In western countries, before the phase of the struggle for power, soviets must not be artificially created, precisely because no **form** is **automatically** revolutionary.

Soviets bring forth the proletarian dictatorship, as it was established in our doctrine before its appearance in history (Marx for 1848 and 1871 France, in Lenin: **«The State and Revolution**»), because both bourgeois and landowners have no access to them, in the course of elections from periphery to the centre. If a regularly elected chamber was to exist besides them, and it formed a government, soviets would be an empty mask. Here's the discussion of 1905, verified by the facts of 1917!

This is the lesson of the history of XIXth and XXth centuries. Before the French revolution a theory of it exists already, although mistaken. It is clear in it the relationship among forces: destruction of the first state (nobility and monarchy) and of the second estate (clergy), but the programme of the new power is: Power to all citizens, to all people; and not (as marxism discovered, thus giving the facts their true «soul»: Introduction to «A **Critique of Political Economy**») power to the third estate, that is to the bourgeoisie. The theory of Voltaire and Rousseau in XVIIIth century gives the content of the revolution, but it cannot describe its constitutional form. It admires the Greek and Roman tradition, but those democracies had the people in the square, i.e., the assembly of all free men: a direct democracy of a minority, as the majority was slave. From the **spontaneous development** of the struggles, even after 1789, the various forms, formerly unforeseeable, arose: national assembly, constituent assembly, convention... matrices of the followed elected chambers of the XVIIIth century. Even the historical English example was only afterwards, with the double chamber, and was theorised **post**festum. Which, in turn, was born from the struggle between two different classes: industrial bourgeoisie and landowners.

The soviet therefore, we can say, is to the revolution in which capitalism falls as the constitutional parliament is to the revolution in which feudalism falls. They are the structures in which the states coming from the revolution that destroyed the ancient regime get organised. In this context we call them **forms of state organisation**, which is a different thing from **social forms** or successive **modes** of production. The old revolutions were not previously conscious of them, because they concealed to themselves the birth of a new ruling class; but our revolution, with its own theory, is conscious of it, and knows the true characters that will have the capitalist social mode contrasted by the communist one, which at the end will be classless, and therefore with no ruling class.

The menshevik and bourgeois view of the Russian revolution aimed at enclosing it within a form of state mechanism, similar to that of capitalist countries: electoral democracy. The marxist and bolshevik view foresaw and knew that the revolution would not stop until the victory of the proletariat, hegemonic on the poor classes, and therefore until its dictatorship. In our studies on the Russian revolution we recalled that even before 1903 Lenin had proposed the formula: Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. In 1917 he is back in Russia, and announces the complete, universal, international formula, centre of the marxist doctrine of the revolution: Proletarian dictatorship.

All of Lenin's work aims at establishing that the Russian revolution does not develop according to «local» specific formulae; although it had for years expected to be a late democratic revolution, the fact that in it, since 1905-1907 phase, the working classes fight in, the front line and develop in the course of the struggle a form of their own, the soviet, turns it into an immediate proletarian class revolution, which fills the new form of itself, and makes it a non-interclassist, non-democratic, non-popular and non-**populist**, but a rather classist form, internationally bound to the vanguard proletariat, internally led by the marxist party, and therefore appeared to **be filled** with the content that the revolutionary theory had foreseen with certainty: class power, class state, class dictatorship, all of them are ends that history cannot achieve but when the class is organised into a party, as written in 1848 **Manifesto**. And it can organise itself into a ruling class, for the destruction of the class society, because power, state and dictatorship are a function **of the party**.

We've already seen that another thesis of Lenin, that we always championed with him against the real infantiles, is that the soviet does not exclude the party, as many in Europe believed, it rather **requires** its presence and efficiency, because the soviet is a simple form of organisation which must be filled with a content, and the party is the only force in the history able to do it.

The first newspaper of the Italian Left was **«Il Soviet**». It opposed the proposal of many maximalists, of creating soviets in Italy in 1919. It stated that it was necessary a revolutionary party, free from opportunists, endowed with a clear theory. It maintained, against the immediatist views, that soviets were not a trade unions or factory councils network, but rather the territorial and centralised tissue of the new proletarian state, whose framework was to rise up in the course of the insurrection; they were therefore organs of a political nature, but their structure needed the active function of the revolutionary party, for the revolution to win. And these teachings were drawn, as was for Lenin, from the Russian lessons of history, which perfectly matched with our doctrine's classical design.

Reality brings about the forms, but theory foresees the content, i.e., the forces, together with their relationship and clashes. In these lapidary passages, if we believe the German translation we're using, Lenin utilised the word «to prophesy». «The controversies of 1905-1907 over the importance of the Soviets prophesied the great struggles of 1917-20».

Those who are not afraid to commit themselves to prophesy the future are followers of leninism, rather than those who lean and waver.

#### The Easy Maneuvering

Although we've already said that we'll devote the final part of this study, which can be considered as a separate study on its own, to the question of parliamentary tactics, we cannot avoid dealing now with an important aspect of the comparison, made by Lenin, between the historical experience of the bolshevik party's struggle in the two revolutions and what was at the time inferred from it as regards the tactics to be adopted by revolutionaries in the various countries. At the bottom of the issue was the necessity to correctly act in order to spread, in the years to come after 1920, the revolution from Russia to Europe, the only way for the victory of socialism in both Europe and Russia. There's therefore no right whatsoever to invoke these 1920 conclusions, and even the statement of the historical problem set and faced by Lenin, for the fools who attribute to him, thus making the most gigantic forgery in history, the intention of abandoning the European revolution to its fate and to go ahead with socialism only in Russia.

In the 1920 situation enormous errors appeared when judgements on Russian events were given. The party and the International were not only worried by the forgeries of socialchauvinists, who defamed the October revolution by denying its proletarian and socialist content, but even by the so-called leftist interpretations, fraught with antimarxist and counterrevolutionary mistakes, such as those we've already mentioned, i.e., to deny the function of the political party, by assuming that the soviet form had eliminated it; or to **have flirtatious ways with anarchism** (Lenin alludes to them in several passages); to say that the Russian revolution had abolished the state, that soviets were not the tissue of the proletarian state (a temporary one, but with an historical life span, sufficient to spread the revolution over Europe), but rather an ephemeral array of insurgent crowds.

When it is clear that the parliament form, peculiar to the antifeudal revolution, must be rapidly destroyed to be substituted by the soviet form of the proletarian dictatorship, and that this is the end, not a last and remote one, but rather immediate, of the whole struggle, then the problem of whether using or not the parliamentary means acquires a mere party strategy and tactics nature. The traditional abstentionism of the anarchist, always fought by the Marxist Left, and especially in Italy, is an individual and not a class attitude. As the collective struggle must lead to a stateless society (and we join, with Lenin, this position, in contrast with the right-wing socialtraitors), what does it mean to say: As within my personal «conscience» I have solved the problem, I boycott the state, that is, in 1960, in 1920 or in 1870, I do not vote.

It is obvious that this is not an historical solution, but rather a childish behaviour.

On which grounds does Lenin reject such petty-bourgeois opportunism? It must be understood, although his dialectical position is not a simple one.

As the whole world is looking at Russia - with admiration or with horror -, Lenin is here to testify what Russia has done, and especially about the Russian proletariat and the bolshevik party, that led its revolution.

There are two «test periods» for bolshevik tactics, 1905-1907 and 1917-1920, separated by a waiting time (incidentally, we must remember, for our own use, that today we're living a far longer waiting time). Lenin shows that we won because we kept away from two dangers: socialdemocratism, that has its limits in the liberal, and therefore bourgeois, state form, and anarchism, which believes it is possible to crush such a form by means of an ideological negation, thus behaving like the ostrich, who believes he's escaped the enemy by burying its own head in the sand.

The bolsheviks had a broad range of tactics, in the two mentioned historical periods. Here's how Lenin summarises the first one:

«The alternation of parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle, of the tactics of boycotting parliament and that of participating in parliament, of legal and illegal forms of struggle, and likewise their interrelations and connections - all this was marked by an extraordinary wealth of content. As for teaching the fundamentals of political science to masses and leaders, to classes and parties alike, each month of this three year period was equivalent to an entire year of «peaceful» and «constitutional» development. Without the «dress rehearsal» of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 would have been impossible.» (op. cit., p. 517)

Second period:

«Tsarism's senility and obsoleteness had (with the aid of the blows and hardships of a most agonising war) created an incredibly destructive force directed against it. Within a few days Russia was transformed into a democratic bourgeois republic, freer - in war conditions - than any other country in the world.» (op. cit., p. 518)

We note that this is the central idea for Lenin, but, dialectically, it is the opposite of solidarity with such a form that rises.

«The leaders of the opposition and revolutionary parties began to set up a government, just as is done in the most «strictly parliamentary» republics; the fact that a man had been a leader of an opposition party in parliament - even in a most reactionary parliament - **facilitated** his subsequent role in the revolution.» (op. cit., p. 519-20)

In 1920 we asked Lenin if, first of all, such an advantage was rather peculiar to the «most reactionary parliament»; and if it was true that he had himself exposed the further counterrevolutionary role of those parliamentary leaders. But here our purpose is of presenting, with the highest accuracy, the construction of Lenin. A little further: «Despite views that are today often to be met with in Europe and America, the Bolsheviks began their victorious struggle against the parliamentary and (in fact) bourgeois republic and against the Mensheviks in a very cautious manner, and the preparations they made for it were by no means simple. At the beginning of the period mentioned, we did **not** call for the overthrow of the government but explained that it was impossible to overthrow it without first changing the composition and the temper of the Soviets. We did not proclaim a boycott of the bourgeois parliament, the Constituent Assembly, but said - and following the April (1917) Conference of our Party began to state officially in the name of the Party - that a bourgeois republic with a Constituent Assembly would be better than a bourgeois republic without a Constituent Assembly, but that a «workers' and peasants'» republic, would be better than any bourgeois-democratic, parliamentary republic. Without such thorough, circumspect, prudent and long preparations, we could not have achieved victory in October 1917, or have maintained up to now that victory.» (op. cit., p. 519-20)

#### The April Conference

It is true that in April 1917, that is soon after his arrival in Russia, when he gave the famous, historical accelerator stroke to the bolshevik action that astonished his comrades, Lenin believed it correct to defend himself against a low attack of the menshevik Goldenburg, who had treated him like a raving madman (nothing to do with prudent circumspection!), and wrote in **«Pravda»: And they pretend that I am against a rapid convocation of the Constituent Assembly**!!!

But historical research enables us today to give the words of Lenin their right meaning: to achieve the brilliant result of dispersing with the force the elected Constituent Assembly, it was necessary a far more efficacious action than the ghastly one of those who would have urged the masses as follows: let all assemblies of the world be elected, what counts is not to vote, and not to set foot in the assembly!

This must be said to the scoundrels, who draw from the 1946 Italian constituent assembly (which was not born from a movement of masses, but rather from the delivery of a clan of degenerate political leaders by means of the American and Allied fleet and army) the historical credit, in order to satisfy the proletarian expectations, of an eternal time, where months are not equivalent to years, as for Lenin, but years are equivalent to months or weeks; and of mawkish counts of ballots, that are still the same after countless repetitions.

As Lenin has led us to the April Conference and to its remarkable platform, that the party officially adopted, it is worth referring to it.

The provisional government is defined as a class, bourgeois government, and opposition to it is declared.

Its foreign policy is defined imperialist, connected to the bourgeois powers of the Entente.

The agreement between Provisional Government and Soviet is denounced as an evidence of the influence of the listed petty-bourgeois parties. Russia is defined as the most petty-bourgeois of all European countries; the above is therefore termed as an **intoxication of the proletariat**.

The moment does not require insurrectional tactics, but it is rather necessary to «pour vinegar and bile into the water of revolutionary-democratic phraseology».

These proposals may seem to be nothing more than propaganda work, but in reality they are a «practical revolutionary work», even without giving the direction of taking up arms (which even in July will be wrong for Lenin). Here is the April tactics: Work of criticism. Preparation and welding of the elements of a **consciously proletarian**, Communist Party. **Liberation** of the proletariat from the **general** petty- bourgeois intoxication. It's worth noting that the party's consciousness is opposed to the «unreasoning trust of masses».

We'll stop a little, to wonder whether the artificial display of anti-fascism in Italy, 17 years after the fall of fascism, and the success of such a super-idiot formula, are in connection

with a state of «unreasoning trust of masses»; **without** the presence of the conscious party, and with no chance of substituting it with a falsely leftist, infantile phraseology.

The next section is against **revolutionary defencism**: that is, the situation we'll have again with Brest-Litovsk in 1918. Although Lenin is here very patient with the masses, who believe that after the tsar's fall there's a revolutionary fatherland to be defended, the thesis says, unhesitatingly:

«The slightest concession to revolutionary defencism is **a betrayal of socialism**, a complete renunciation of internationalism.» (From **«The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution: Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party**», Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 65)

On the end of the war. The first step is to turn the imperialist war into a civil war. The second must be the transfer of state power to the proletariat.

On the type of state. **The parliamentary democratic republic** is the most perfect, the most advanced type of bourgeois state. The new type appeared with the Paris Commune, and is today impersonated by the soviets. The democratic state, and its apparatus (that must be smashed), dominates the masses from above, soviets move from the bottom up.

The International. The text of April is not second to that of May 1920 in stigmatising both the social chauvinist right and the centre, the representatives of which are listed, from Kautsky to Turati. The majority of Zimmerwald is criticised for its «social pacifism», and the foundation of the IIIrd International is announced. Of a special interest today is the judgement on pacifism.

«Those who confine themselves to «demanding» that the bourgeois governments should conclude peace or «ascertain the will of the people for peace», etc., are **actually** slipping into reformism. **For, objectively, the problem of the war can be solved only in a revolutionary way**.» ibid., p. 80)

Both the peace and the liberation of peoples from the consequences of the war (debts)..., can only be achieved by means of the proletarian revolution, There's no other way out.

The way the modern «official» leninists reconcile the above theses with the following: first, the construction of socialism in one country; second, the avoidability of the war by means of the will of the peoples; third, the détente and the peaceful coexistence, be it between states with a different regime, or between states with analogous regimes, that's no use to ask them.

The final part of the April platform is on the changing of name of the Russian party, from socialdemocratic to **communist**.

The arguments are classic and well known. We shall only recall some formulations, to end with the demonstration that Lenin's tactical prudence is miles from the distortion and omission of principles, as the sentences from the party public document of the difficult April 1917 have already demonstrated. In it is confirmed the true nature of the opportunist plague, a deep problem in 1920 and even more deep nowadays.

There are two **scientifical** arguments against the name socialdemocracy, in keeping with the frequent warnings of Marx and Engels. The first term is wrong, because socialism is for us a temporary end, on the way to communism. The second term is wrong because «democracy is a form of state, whereas we marxists are opposed to **every kind** of state.» Our full programme is **communism with no state**. Which means: communism with no democracy.

### Nature of Opportunism

Many passages of «'Left-wing' communism» remind and paraphrase, almost every sentence, the following passage:

«We are marxists and we take as our basis the **Communist Manifesto**, which has been distorted and betrayed by the Social-Democrats on two main points: the working men have no country: «defence of the fatherland» in an imperialist war is a betrayal of socialism; and the Marxist doctrine of the state has been distorted by the Second International.» (ibid., p. 84)

The historical phenomenon of opportunism, if we may with our words summarise the content of half a century of polemical battles, consists in making, at a given, important turning-point of the historical situation - with the purpose of doing the opposite of what the party had always proclaimed -, a sensational «discovery».

The history of the betrayal is a history of «discoveries», administered in crucial moments to the proletariat, that do to its rulers the favour of confusing and weakening the workers.

Each time one of such «discoveries» appears, a formula that seemed reliable and definitive is, when the moment comes to put it into practice, emptied and broken to pieces. One of these formulae, which we shall use here as a clear example, is from the **Manifesto**, quoted here by Lenin: **the working men have no country**. And: **they cannot be deprived of what they don't have**. It is the classic answer to the old «objections» to communism,

In Russia the majority of the proletarian movement, at the outbreak of the war in 1914, did not feel up to saying that the Russian workers should defend a country personified by the tsar. Only a few socialist leaders dared to advocate the «defencist» thesis of the alleged German aggression, and, sad to say, among them was the master of Lenin, Plekhanov.

But after the tsar's downfall in February 1917 defencism spread. After the concession of a parliamentary democracy (which only consisted in a provisional government of the party leaders of the old Duma, as Lenin explains) almost all political leaders announced to the masses that now they had found a country and that it was the case of taking up the arms to defend it, which caused an immense delight to the Anglo-French democracies.

Lenin, as we have seen, had to oppose this hateful forgery with all his might and main.

Things were not quite different in Italy. It is known that at the outbreak of World War 1 only a very few people within the socialist party justified, the social- defencism of the Germans, French, etc. But there were some, even in the first months and before the foul betrayal of Mussolini.

Among them was Paoloni, a poor devil that we recall only for the odd coincidence that he was a sort of expert in low level propaganda. He was editor of a little newspaper, **«Il Seme**» (the seed), that costed one cent (as to say, today, less than five liras). For decades it had made, of course, a lot of propaganda on the **«Communist Manifesto**». When we reminded this person of the famous phrase that cannot be forgotten he, who had never dared to say or write it before, poured out the shameless explanation: Yes, in 1848 Marx said that working men have no country, because he was referring to countries where the democratic vote had not yet been achieved. But, wherever it has been achieved, the phrase is no longer valid, and the proletarians of a parliamentary republic, or even of a constitutional monarchy, have acquired a country to defend on the battlefields.

Here is the discovery. Discovery, not because a truth has been found, but because, on the contrary, an explanation is passed off that in a so long lapse of time, from 1848 till 1914, year of the imperialist war, nobody had thought to give.

Discovery and surprise. But such waves of shameful swindle can in a few days destroy the work efforts of decades, of the whole party, or at least of the sound part of it.

Quite similar is the question of democracy and the state. For decades, nothing changing in the marxist critique, it has been propagated the formula according to which even in the most democratic republic the state is a machinery to exploit the proletariat in the interests of the bourgeoisie. In a few days following August 1st, 1914, it is «discovered» that it means nothing when the state is aggressed; when we have to choose between two states, democratic to a different extent; when it is the matter of reuniting a province to its nationality and language; and for hundreds of more reasons.

These matters have all been thoroughly examined by marxism, with reference to all geographical areas and to all historical periods, and cannot easily be translated into formulae; but when a settlement is believed to have been reached, it ends up like the famous Stuttgart and Basel resolutions; they say it was right to vote them, but the situation had different developments, if compared to those expected at the time; and they discover that, in the only case in which they are enforced, there are good reasons to shamelessly violate them.

The lesson of the struggle against opportunism by Lenin and by the IIIrd International is that, if we want to defeat it, we must claim the possibility of «writing in advance the formulae that are to be strictly respected in the high moment of the historical event.» The party therefore foresees the situations to come, and outlines its plans of action for them.

From the examination of the pages of Lenin and of the whole, vibrant history of his life and battles, no other conclusions can be drawn. He wanted to build a theory and an organisation that could not be overwhelmed, as was the case, at the beginning of August 1914, for both the doctrines of «official» marxist socialism and the organism of the IInd International.

This can be read in every page and every line, by comparing the historical events and their clear developments, rather than with a pedantic work of literal exegesis.

As Lenin exposed those who said that it was wrong not to defend the country, and that socialism foretells a democratic state, the same shame must fall today on those who maintain that working classes' interests can legally coexist with a democratic constitution, that a pacifist campaign can avoid the war and substitute it with a harmless emulative competition among states with different regimes (which are not different indeed), or that mingling proletarian demands with those of petty-bourgeois (and middle class!) strata is no longer an infection and dulling of the revolutionary vigour, but rather a proletarian success.

If those who today say all the above things (and we can hear even worse ones on patriotism, legalitarianism, moralism and so on) confessed they're going back to the positions of Kerensky, Scheidemann, Turati, Renaudel, and the many others who were branded with a hot iron by Lenin, we would have present-day and past opportunisms as Siamese twins.

But if the spokesman of so many infamies pretend to find their justifications in the pages of Lenin, and in those of Marx and Engels, after that Lenin had clearly brought them out again, then we must say that today's opportunism can receive no forgiveness, and is to be cursed three times more than the first one; and that its results, as it can be seen everywhere, are of a ten times worse defeatism; and that the more it is praiseworthy for the bourgeois counterrevolution.

#### **Resumption and Recapitulation**

In the preceding pages we aimed at pointing out the right method to make use of the fundamental texts of the revolutionary theory. They must be placed within the setting of the time they appeared and of the struggles then taking place, to be able to find, along the course of their development, the motives that caused their writing and propagation, as well as the aims those revolutionaries intended to achieve. We have given an overall picture of Lenin's writing, and then developed the presentation and comment of its first chapters; when such a work will be advanced enough, every militant or group of comrades of our eninist on will be able to read it through while drawing from it the right conclusions.

A given party text does not become widely known and quoted by virtue of the literary notoriousness of its author, but rather because its passing, not so much from reader to reader, as from group to group and from section to section within the party and the movement, meets a real necessity of the struggle and gives fruitful and powerful solutions to class problems in important moments of history and, when it is the matter of stages of the unique revolutionary line, even to problems of the future. Such a method is diametrically opposed to the wicked one of taking isolated quotations out of context, and of using them out of their time, their origin and of their purposes, in order to distort and falsify; that is the way the mortal enemies of Lenin used the works of Marx and Engels, and for the «Tables» of party doctrine. Lenin himself was author and master of our collective method of drawing lessons from history, and of choosing the representations of history that are vital oxygen of each struggling movement, and of ours above all.

As our goal is not of publishing an edition of Lenin's «'Left-wing' communism» with explanatory footnotes like an annotated Dante's book - which would be a remarkable work, if our work hands and diffusion media in there striking times were less slight; and quod differtur non aufertur – we believe having given so far enough practical proofs on our method of reading Lenin, and to be able to draw the conclusions on all general and world issues on the method of proletarian struggle. A brief reference to the «Italian» questions will serve to establish that the tactical disagreement between Lenin and ourselves (already obsolete in the 1920 situation here dealt with), and even the tactical disagreement of the years following the illness and death of Lenin, are negligible differences, for two reasons. The first one is that the Italian Left, as Lenin eninist in this text, was on his side in the struggle against the libertarian petty-bourgeois infantilism, which we prefer calling **immediatist** and not left-wing (our school has always denied that anarchists are at the left of eninist, yesterday, today or tomorrow), as well as in comparing this opportunism with the right wing one; in Italy the most imbued with such eninist current (ordinovism, or movement of factory councils), but an error was the nevertheless we fairly managed to bring it into the eninis field, by accepting their very flexible party discipline, even with reference to parliamentary participation. The other reason is that, like Lenin, who had always seen the right wing socialdemocratic opportunism as the worst enemy, the Italian Left was the first to see that danger rise within the IIIrd International, and to fight it in the further congresses. The recent events have demonstrated the correctness of such a violent reaction of ours; which would have been unfounded, also for Lenin, if it meant a relapse into left wing infantilism, but which instead was carried on the pure ground of eninis, as is demonstrated by the exact previsions of the degenerations of the thirty and more years to come.

The above can be proved by a comparison between this text, which we devoured word by word in Moscow in 1920, and the ignoble one coming from Moscow in 1960 after a meeting of false communist and workers' parties; the latter raises to the rank of a proclamation of principle the repudiation of all inist , eninist lessons of October 1917. But it is for those very lessons that Lenin rises in his greatness, although on certain issues he is not sufficiently pessimist, as for a likely comeback of pacifist, and collaborationist with the capital, «senilism».

While leaving to the comrades the task of the detailed comparison of the texts, we shall summarise the cardinal points of the theses of Lenin's «'Left-wing' communism».

# Chapter V: The Struggle Against Reformism and Anarchism

The Insults to October

Two waves of sordid bile were befalling the bolsheviks three years after the victory, and the polemics stood on a heated, struggling world. On the answer to be given to these two attacking groups depended the destiny of the organisation of the proletarian movement in Russia and outside, as well as the goal that at that time was beyond dispute for all: to achieve, before the end of the crisis that followed World War 1 and the collapse of Russian tsarism and capitalism, the downfall of the bourgeois power in at least some of the most important European countries.

The two waves of slanders were both founded on the same antimarxist ravings; it suited the pure bourgeois, as well as the petty-bourgeois and the semiproletarians (**«'Leftwing' communism**» is the most overwhelming accusation ever written against the historical deficiency of these latter classes), to seriously believe in the usual cliché: Lenin's bolsheviks had made by force a revolution **that should not be**. For the right-wing scoundrels, for the 1914 socialchauvinists, the tsar's war at the side of imperialist democracies was not to be disturbed; or the tsar could be set aside, but only in order to better rope in the Russian population to the world massacre. The castrators of marxism also maintained that Russia had the right to make its liberal revolution, but not the proletarian and socialist one, as the economic development was not at the right... cooking point, and waiting for the advanced Europe to move first was de rigueur. Socialpatriotic argument and social-reformist argument.

To go beyond these two historical arguments had been a coup de main against democracy, they said, and even against marxist materialism, which, yesterday as well as today, they want to be just a filthy doormat for democracy.

**From the other side**, which was correct to call **left-wing** in a popular essay - those who outlived Vladimir by forty years have not the right to ask him if his choice of vocabules was successful; times were not stinking at that time, but rather gloriously pressing; what's more, by the spring of 1920 the fortunes of revolution were fading, and the last trumps of the terrible game were being played: Lenin knew that a decline in Europe would also mean a decline in Russia, and that no time could be wasted: he therefore had to speak loud and clear, with no subtilisations - from the side thus called for emergency reasons **left-wing**, they started to echo wickedly the bourgeois, by saying that the bolshevik party had forced both history and the free will of the masses, to establish its own rule, its power, the interests of a leading group which would have soon started to oppress in other ways the proletariat, too early believed to be the winner.

This blasphemy is worse than the former, as in it lies all the misery of the libertarian pettybourgeois: party means thirst for power, caused by the desire of exploiting the «people», and the instrument of such a thirst is the state, the government formed to lead the revolution: all governors are oppressors. We maintain that no movement joined Lenin in his battle against these irresponsible chatterers like the Italian left marxists, and in 1960 we condemn them with the same conviction of 1920. Our condemnation of stalinism, and of the even worse khruschevism, is not based on the quite infantile complaint: they do all that because they are clung like oysters to the chair of power!

But, in 1920, in almost all left-wing parties of Europe and America this disease was spreading: a **left-wing** doctrinairism, with such a store, can sabotage more than right-

wing doctrinairism; and Lenin rightly struck pitilessly, in that very important moment, although the distinction between the two sorts of danger is evident in all the pages.

We heard him say that both before and after the conquest of power it is more difficult to defeat the petty-bourgeois spirit than the power of big bourgeoisie. His clairvoyant greatness is confirmed by the hard experience of the times. It was the petty-bourgeois who killed the revolution and put the proletariat in a state of lethargy. The bourgeoisie hasn't won with the right (fascism), but rather with the left (democratic and libertarian corruption of the working class).

Such a defamation of October was crowned by the base thesis: social backwardness, absence of a democratic tradition, great **ignorance** of the barbarian, Asiatic, primitive Russian population: all of them were «national» characters that allowed that «way» to revolution; while we leninists described it in its essential stages: violence, insurrection, destruction of the old state, dictatorship of the proletarian party, revolutionary terror, destruction of rival parties; which we prognosticated - then as well as today - for all countries.

For reformists, as well as for anarchists, all of them staunch admirers of bourgeois civilization, Lenin says:

«the petty bourgeois shocked by the horrors of capitalism: here is a social phenomenon that, like anarchism, is typical of all capitalist countries. The inconstancy of such revolutionary velleities, their readiness to rapidly turn into subjugation, apathy, imaginations, and even into a wild enthusiasm for this or that fashionable bourgeois tendency.» (and we add: as today science fiction, the admiration of technology, the fetish of **scientifical** conquests...) «all this universally is known»), therefore for both wings of the anti-Russian defamation, in the more civilised countries and within more cultured people (which means more dulled in the school of the ruling class and in the superstition of the **culture**, which was supposed to be, and actually is today, the same everywhere) those tremendous stages will not be necessary, and the **persuasion**, the **democratic way**, the **peaceful way**, will make it possible to avoid those horrors of October. Who has followed the example of the right- and leftwing doctrinairians, who insulted Lenin, who, but the corrupted movement that has just pontificated, after a mysterious conclave, from Moscow?

And who's worthy, like those of 1920, of his fierce reply, but these present-day monks of the Kremlin's sacristy?

#### Russia and the Rest of Europe

If Lenin's **«'Left-wing' communism**» is therefore rightly utilised against the external and internal train-bearers of Khruschev's clique, rather than against us, supporters of the integral revolutionary marxism, we believe having shown with sufficient detail that the «sage's» statement demolishes the stalinian blasphemy on «socialism in Russia alone».

We have seen that the starting-point of the historical defence of the great conquest of Russia's October, which must be carried out to the shame of all defamers, in keeping with

the preceding paragraph, lies in establishing the international importance. We have nothing to oppose to Lenin's conclusion, i.e., that we must beware of right-wing doctrinairism, that leads to falling into pure bourgeois liberalism and in the complicity with the regime of capital, both in war and in peace; and of «left-wing», or pettybourgeois, doctrinairism, which falls in a silly rule of individualist parity of a moral preservation that is content with empty negations, which free the rebel, **individual** while having no concern for the slave society. It is a necessity in all countries, as in all countries such a danger exists, and Russians, who won, show with their party history to have been able to defend themselves from it in time.

But before getting to this «tactical» point, which gave rise to so many historical discussions, the text definitely indicates which steps and stages of the bolshevik revolution are «in the strictest sense» international. We've already given the passages, and we recall that of chapter III:

«Experience has proved that, on certain quite essential questions of the proletarian revolution, all countries will inevitably have to do what Russia has done.» Lenin, Selected Works, p. 519. (In the old French translation: «will inevitably pass by where Russia has passed.»)

The assertion that it is a matter of achieving the proletarian dictatorship in the Western Europe, as the first point of the whole demonstration, and that it is the only «way», and that its stages are those so many times mentioned, is alone sufficient to give its due to Stalin's theory: «construction of the socialist economy in Russia alone», and to the XXth Congress, which seemed to condemn Stalin's ghost: «each country has its own national way to socialism»; and to today's Moscow: «nowadays the whole world is moving toward socialism in a peaceful way».

What was for Lenin **compulsory**, first becomes optional then actually **forbidden**. And all this is baptised «marxism-leninism»!

We'll quote a few passages from the Xth and final chapter, «Several conclusions», here translated from the German text. (See also the mentioned English edition, pp. 566 - 576). It aims, in the most vehement and decided way, at curing the «infantile disorder», and dramatises its symptoms, although the prognosis is optimistic. As novices, we preferred to try to defeat the senile disease, the prognosis of which was sinister. After forty years, it is easy for us to be right. If only it weren't true!

However, in this very impassioned tirade (we're not being disrespectful, if the author himself writes: I don't claim to present anything more than the cursory notes of a publicist) the forceful writer seems to write **cursory notes** on the filthy shames of 1928, of 1956, of 1960.

«In less than two years, the international character of the Soviets, the spread of this form of struggle and organisation to the world working-class movement and the historical mission of the Soviets as the gravedigger, heir and successor of bourgeois parliamentarism and of bourgeois democracy in general, all became clear.» Lenin seems to put himself the question of the XXth Congress: Are there still in the world national distinctions? And he answers: It's true, we must follow the peculiarities of each country in facing the tackling of

«a **single** and unique international task for all» (he underlines): «victory over» (rightwing) «opportunism and Left doctrinairism within the working-class movement; the overthrow of the bourgeoisie; the establishment of a Soviet republic and a proletarian dictatorship - such is the basic task in the historical period that all the advanced (and not advanced) countries are going through».

And:

«The chief thing - though, of course, not everything, we're far from having done everything - has already been achieved: the vanguard of the working class has been won over, has ranged itself on the side of Soviet power **against parliamentarism**,» (our capitals) «on the side of the dictatorship of the proletariat and **against bourgeois democracy**».

We should copy everything, but it is clear that all that Lenin considered **already** done, has been undone by the ragamuffins who invite the proletarians to fight for peace, democracy, national freedom, and finally let out, in an undertone... socialism. Emulated, of course, never dictated, and, above all, never conquered by taking up arms.

Let's go to the end of the chapter (and of the quotations):

«The Communists must exert every effort to direct the working-class movement and social development in general along the straightest and shortest road to the victory of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world-wide scale... World revolution has been powerfully stimulated and accelerated by the horrors, vileness and abominations of the world imperialist war and the hopelessness of the situation created by it, this revolution is developing in width and depth with such rapidity, with such a wonderful wealth of changing forms, with such an edifying refutation of all doctrinairism, that there is every reason to hope for a rapid and complete recovery of the international communist movement from the infantile disorder of 'left-wing' communism.«

In the texts of 1920 «Left-wing» is always in inverted commas.

Lenin, in an outburst of optimism (all revolutionaries have the duty of being an optimist), sees the revolution coming **outside Russia**, and that's his only concern. When he attributes to it a complex variety of phenomena, he does not certainly mean that, to avoid doctrinairism, we may get rid of the only and unique international features given by the proletarian dictatorship and the destruction of democracy. When he perceived such a danger he did not speak of disorder, but rather of death.

Those who boast of having beaten infantilism in us, have not cured in themselves and in others the left-wing disorder. They died of the right-wing disorder, and they blasphemed Lenin; their corpse shows the violet and repugnant bubo of the opportunist plague.

# Chapter VI: Key to the alleged «authorisation to compromises» of Lenin

#### **Theory and Historical Experience**

Lenin, who, after so formidable struggles against fierce enemies of his and other countries, has the double responsibility of both the Russian state and the world movement, and who is sure that if mistakes will be made - which is not avoidable - it will never be a matter of repudiating the Soviet system and the proletarian dictatorship, or of relapsing into the notorious defence of the fatherland, which is typical of the open accomplices of the bourgeoisie; Lenin is right, and was to be admired when he believed it being better not to close all roads before the difficulties the future might show, and did not want us to give up certain solutions only because the exterior formulae were not pure, beautiful, elegant and glowing. Only fools can't understand that for the party cause the revolutionary militant is ready to do anything. To choose the methods according to ethical, esthetical, and therefore subjective, motives, looking at the form rather than at the content, is, as he says and we always say, a silly thing.

But it is likewise silly not to use the historical experience of the movement in order to establish if given tactical means, in spite of the willingness of those who adopt them, may or may not lead to disaster. We always made use of such an experience, and did not deprive of its importance the Russian experience, although always bearing in mind what Lenin here acknowledges, i.e., that the pernicious effects of the western liberal-democratic environment had no precedents in Russia, where the tsarist oppression itself, Lenin explains, had been a favourable condition.

Those who know the work of Lenin only badly, and whose eyes are not able to appraise the stature of his construction, naively believe that according to Lenin the experience of Russia's struggle has disclosed for the first time the way of revolution, and that all we have to do is walk in those footsteps. But Lenin's false followers are today receding from even such counterfeit leninism, as they promise (to their emulated capitalist friends) to no longer follow in the footsteps of October.

Lenin's construction is far greater, as we've demonstrated with the preceding analysis.

The bolshevik victory came from the fact that the Russian masses, with the experience of the struggle, realised to be on the path, as previously described by that glorious party. The strength of the Russian party was not therefore that of **adapting** itself to the course of events, allegedly spontaneous and unpredictable. Nor because, having exceptional and heroical men and leaders, they were able to coerce history and bend the events (as Gramsci naively and immediatistically believed in 1917, who was still rubbing his eyes after leaving the darkness of the defence of the democratic fatherland). Their force was neither in the recovery from, nor in the violent reversal of unfavourable conditions, but rather in the biggest example so far boasted by our century-old movement of **anticipation of the real history**.

As a matter of fact Lenin, whilst recalling all other favourable conditions, puts at the top the timely choice of the **right** revolutionary theory, marxism. When is an historical theory right? When it outlines a long, long time before the essential features of the future.

Therefore Lenin never said, wrote or dreamt that, once discovered or invented in Russia a recipe to make the revolution, it was the matter of teaching it to someone else.

The Russian bolsheviks had found the theory just in the West and - we quoted the passages - they found it after half a century of search; the events took place in such a way that all opposed theories, either borrowed themselves from the West or formed in different ways in Russia, went bankrupt.

At this point, comes the famous game on the usual sentences. Theory is not a dogma. Theory, for Marx and Engels, is not a dogma, but rather a guide for action. These unquestionable sentences present the marxist position, that theory is far more than a written answer to the whys and wherefores of facts, an explanation of problems and mysteries of reality: the historical theory is the discovery of a way of human action, through which the real social world is changed, subverted. It does not take place because of the **will** or the **proposal** of an outstanding mind, but because at a given moment the key to the historical events has been found, discovered, theorised. Of course it does not mean that the detail of episodes and particular situations has been prophesised, but rather that certain fundamental lines, certain principles, that in Lenin are, as a thousand times stated, the class insurrection, the destruction of the state, the new state of proletarian dictatorship, has been established.

But isn't the movement of masses to give life to theory, which without it would be dead? What does Lenin mean by this? That theory is a blank paper on which the masses will tomorrow write what is today unknown? Had that been his thought, he would, trivially speaking, closed up shop - and us, too. As who thus thinks can only open one shop: that of personal success and of his own personal business. To attribute the above to Lenin and to the great bolsheviks means to maintain that their defence of party, seizure of power, handling of both dictatorship and terror, were due to the same motive of the scoundrels of both gangs: thirst, even bloody, for privilege. But Lenin mercilessly lashes out at such people, by using passional expressions, i.e., of disappointed leaders who do not have honesty toward themselves.

We do not need to expound this issue in a doctrinarian way. Lenin solves the problem in his superb booklet. The lesson of the movement of masses that taught the theory; the only right one, born in France or Germany, winning in Russia; it is the lesson «of the whole 19th century», of the **masses** that since 1789 threw themselves on the Bastille. Lenin reads this theory in the pages of the Manifesto, and finds it again, after scattering generations of distorters, among the revolting crowds of 1905 and 1917. Here is the relationship between theory and masses action, in Lenin's thought, in Lenin's action, in the power of human history. Theory has for Lenin a date of birth, when its cornerstones are definitely established: it's that of the French revolution. It's not the bourgeois theory of liberal revolution, but rather the different and original theory, as issued by the new proletarian class, that Lenin maintains having been formulated in red-hot types by Karl Marx.

It is clear that the path of the Russian revolution can be found since we know the path of the French revolution, seen as an example of bourgeois revolutions, of which the English one was the first, - but it does not mean that they are identical -. This thesis, on which is

founded our doctrine for over a century, must be dialectically understood. It's not a matter of the path as seen by the bourgeois, that is of the false «self-consciousness of the revolution» - Marx, Preface to the «Critique of the Political Economy» -, but rather as it was discovered by our doctrine.

The revolution in France ends with the bourgeois dictatorship, and falsely states to have ended with democracy, a human conquest of all classes. Marxism discovers that democracy means power of one class, the capitalist one, and predicts the new class revolution and the proletarian dictatorship, only foundations for the abolition of classes. Under this flag the working class fights during the whole 19th century in the European countries, before and after the liberal revolution's victory.

The historical defeats do not prevent the theory from being personified by the action of masses. Before the Russian masses launch their victorious attack, thanks also to their fight experience of 1905 (here lies the essence of Lenin's work), a party, the bolshevik, is drawn up on the right theory: **the masses do not stop with democracy, which means dictatorship of capital, they thrust to the proletarian dictatorship**. Lenin masterly establishes that between the two outcomes there's not the difference of one stage, but rather an abyss, separating the modern world in two fields of pitiless struggle.

Whoever intelligently reads **«'Left-wing' communism**» can only draw from it our own thesis, that the revolutionary theory arises at a particular historical moment, rather than that, peculiar to Moscow renegades, according to which theory is continuously elaborated and modified. Such a moment, both for Lenin and for us, was not October 1917, but rather 1847, when the proletarian class condensed in its historical programme, in its **Manifesto**, the experience of the bourgeois revolution's betrayal, as well as the destruction of the lie of democracy as a human and eternal conquest.

To fraudulently take from Lenin the permit to «adopt» the theory in order to «enrich it» with the facts of modern times (shitty times!); here is the infamous finishing line, the democracy **at large**, which is nothing but bourgeois democracy, raised to an idol of humanity and, which is most terrible, of the proletariat!

#### People, Classes, Masses, Party

The fact that a vital duty was that of demolishing petty-bourgeois infantilism is clearly demonstrated by Lenin's defence (chapter on Germany) against the attack on the fundamental party form.

Such an attack had already been carried on in the same way by right-wing opportunists, the **revisionists**. In Germany, in Italy, in Russia, and everywhere, they reasoned in the same insidious way. The masses were put ahead of the class, the class ahead of the party. Lenin's and our position is exactly the opposite.

We may own up that Lenin might have found excessive our way of advocating the above in front of everything and everybody. Let's own up that on the eve of the decisive battle it is grave to lose some battalions, some divisions, by too brutally rejecting those mistrustful towards the party; and that it may be excess of doctrinairism. It would have been by the way an excess of brutality exactly toward immediatist infantilism, which sees the class acting without its vital intermediary, the party, and which, with its vain purity, will end up clouding the class within the masses and finally the masses within the people. This is the fatal slope of all opportunism: from the proletarian party to a mixture of petty-bourgeois strata, and finally to the totally bourgeois people's democracy.

As even the opportunists of the old right were on the same path. They had belittled everywhere the party form. The yellow Trade Unions and their bonzes' bureaucracy were stronger in number, and therefore more important within the party's organisation and political structure. The M.P.s were more important than the party sections and militants, because they represented a far broader mass, the electors, most of whom were not party members. The trade unions' bonzes, through the party M.P.s, negotiated with the employers and with bourgeois ministries, made alliances with parties that represented petty-bourgeois strata, and this chain ended up with a subordination to the popular, national, inter-classist interest; as we see today, under our very eyes, is the behaviour of those who do not decide to repudiate the name of communists and... leninists.

Their scheme suits the legend of the «July uprising». The big party in Italy is today corrupt to the bone, it ruined the preparation of the masses, and deprived them of all class energy. It lies on an interclassist electoral mass, where the petty-bourgeois strata prevail on real proletarians; the tendency of the party bonzes is to reach the intermediate bourgeois strata, and to isolate from the **people** only a minority of high-rank prelates and alleged captains of industry. How will such a party leave that abyss: will the not better defined **masses** (and, according to another, empty but fashionable formula, the **young masses**) give a lesson to this party, which, always ready to renew its theory, makes a leftist revision, and takes a revolutionary attitude?

Such a way is only illusion before a so scoundrelish and counterrevolutionary party. But a 1960 infantilism, worse than the one forgiven by Lenin in view of the horror of the enormities of the right-wingers of the time (though less grave than today's), would be to say: Masses must act with no class spirit, with no wage labourers' pre-eminence or with the latters' subjection to students, intellectuals and the like, while abolishing any party organisation. Action is all!

Hence the passages we abundantly quoted from Lenin: the political party as the prime revolutionary factor; wage labourers of both city and country as the sole revolutionary class; the mass of semi-proletarian workers, whose physical movement may be of help in a more than ripe situation, on the condition that the proletarian party is strong in both theory and strategy, as subordinated to the class. Lenin pointed out the prime conditions, i.e. discipline and centralisation, within both party and class. Party, centralisation, organisational and class discipline, all of these issues advocated by the Left since before the war; being the hesitation in accepting them peculiar to the infantilist immediatism. We believe being no longer necessary to dwell on this any further.

# Flexibility or Rigidity?

The contemporary world as a whole, and its literature as well, lives of set phrases, which is peculiar to the epochs of decadence. That whoever opposes today's unbelievable repudiations hasn't learnt from Lenin that tactics must be flexible, is one of such fixed ideas. We won't deny that Lenin used that term. But Lenin was rigid, when he taught to be flexible. He wanted the party to be flexible like a steel blade, which is the hardest material to break. But these people who dare speak about him are flexible like ricotta, not to mention another material, better suited to symbolise them; i.e., that becomes strained, not to resume the inexorable direction of the sword that goes to the heart of the enemy, but rather like a trampled turd.

Lenin doesn't want to make doctrinairism and spares the use of his doctrinal power: it isn't convenient to risk blinding those we intend to enlighten. He, to the delight of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals grown up, as in Turin, in the idealist school, wants to be concrete and gives practical examples, and we'll keep to them. Woe betide the turd willing to be **abstract**. After years of drying up, he isn't even able to be concrete. In English **concrete** is a mixture of sand, gravel and cement: once it's set, of course. The Italian concretes haven't set yet, after so many years; they're on the contrary beyond all limits of softness.

We bolsheviks, says Lenin, have not been **intransigent** in the pre-revolution years; we made deals, alliances, compromises with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. But it does not justify the English, French, etc., allies of the bourgeoisie in power. Where is then the distinction between revolutionary flexibility and surrender to the bourgeoisie? The issue is not a trivial one.

First of all we answered Lenin that before the fall of the despotic feudal regime, in keeping with an old marxist principle, a **block** of the workers' party with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois democratic parties is not to be excluded. As Lenin and Trotsky have pointed out, Marx and Engels said that in 1848. In such a situation, as in China and colonies during the present century, those parties have an insurrectional programme and task. The solution we're looking for is not a lesson of recent history or of the 20th century: Lenin shows us that it's already complete in Marx: if this is doctrinairism, then he is the doctrinarian. It is a matter of **making compromises** with those movements but, within ours, to never lose sight of the fact that at the very next stage they'll turn into enemies, and that our action - even if thanks to deception, **but deception for them not for ourselves** - will easily be directed toward their defeat and destruction. A flexible manoeuvre then; but, if the preparation of our party's ranks is omitted, if the ideology of the temporary allies is not unceasingly denounced, it will turn into our own ruin and defeat.

We might call the above a «schema» (another word that is fashionable to laugh at), a theoretical schema in Marx because it has not yet achieved its whole development, while for Lenin it becomes historical praxis, and real action in October 1917. This is clear and it is likewise clear that doctrine has come before action, and that victory rewarded the **right** doctrine. Lenin was afraid that we kids would have inferred: let's find the right doctrine and then stop, with our hands in our pockets. We did our best not to deserve such a bad reputation; but a far, a thousand times worse reputation is that of those who bent (with immense elasticity, but still bent) to the enemy's defeatism.

Lenin's examples should have referred to the situations of full bourgeois regimes; and should have dealt with allies and «compromises» only within the field of the «workers»' parties, which at the time were of three types: second, second and a half and third Internationals. Such was the nature of the discussion after Lenin. The champions of the **united front** actually invoked him; but they did not believe that the theory of compromise (as we foresaw and feared) would have spread to the bourgeois and capitalist parties and states with just a smattering of eternal «democracy»; the latter being the same justification advanced by the 1914 cads for their shift to the defence of the fatherland in the imperialist war.

Let us therefore take Lenin's examples on the bolshevik tactics under tsarism. They're sufficient to know who understands Lenin and who repudiates him.

Lenin recalls that in 1901-02 the bolsheviks (then socialdemocrats) made a short-lived but formal alliance with Struve, leader of bourgeois liberalism (the famous **legal marxists**). But how, under which conditions?

«While at the same time being able to wage an unremitting and most merciless ideological and political struggle against bourgeois liberalism and against the slightest manifestations of its influence in the working-class movement.» (op. cit., p. 551)

Is it possible to say anything even remotely similar about the behaviour of French or Italian communists within the partisan Resistance? Apart from the astronomical distance between capitalist fascism and the feudal tsarism, nothing was done as to the ideological battle against bourgeois radical or christian democrats, and their influence has been allowed to spread among proletarians who were already quite antimasonic & anticatholic...

Lenin mentions the pre-revolutionary agreements of bolsheviks with both mensheviks and populists, and justifies them with the example of the final defeat and dispersion of such parties. He finally takes delight - with a true polemicist's «flirtatiousness» - in mentioning the most famous compromise, that after the revolution with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, a peasant and petty-bourgeois party. This «block», not made in bourgeois times but after the seizure of power, ensured the majority in the soviets and made possible the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly.

Such a block was dissolved by the Socialist-Revolutionaries themselves, owing to disagreements upon the acceptation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The allies broke off for «intransigence» and «hatred of compromises». The bolshevik party was on the verge of scission. The «S.R.s» attempted an armed rebellion, and had to be repressed. In this succession of turning-points Lenin was always on the side of the marxist revolutionary line; the infantiles did not understand him, but in Italy we were with him, even when direct communications were cut.

It was, Lenin says here, a compromise with a whole non-proletarian class, the small peasants. But, although it was possible to do and peasants kept to their revolutionary commitment in the epic struggle against the whites of all sorts (who hoped to see them split from the city workers), the greatness of Lenin was that he never doctrinally
compromised the marxist agrarian theory, and that he carried out the arduous manoeuvres with his eyes always fixed on the final goal. Under Stalin such a powerful policy was reversed and betrayed, while the hegemony of the proletariat on the peasants was gradually demolished (up to today's shames), to give life to the petty-bourgeois Kolkhos form. The flexibility of the revolutionary manoeuvre was substituted by the shame of the renunciations that made of Russia a non-proletarian country, ruled by such lackeys of world capital as petty-bourgeois; and the pseudo-doctrine of coexistence does, not express but this type of compromise, which is put by Lenin's historical analysis among those of traitors.

## Political Revolution, Social Evolution

The impudence of Moscow's samhedrin and of its satellites is boundless when they outline, of course in the name of eninis and eninism, a way to the **victory** of socialism, according to which the latter would conquer the states of the western block by means of a peaceful and imitative (the model!) penetration, such as the one condemned by Lenin for Russia 1920, as to the passages we have quoted. And today, through new laborious as well as camouflaged compromises, this absurd theory takes, forty years later, the senseless form of the leader-state to which all the other eighty parties pay their mystical and vile respects.

Today's model, although with a big industrial and capitalist development, shines above all in the very field of industrial production for eninism s ation, mercantilism, and for its always more shameless entrance into the world monetary gambling den.

Such stuff is concealed under a doctrinairism (that really of a counterfeit metal) which excuses its faults by means of a condemnation of a mere eninism ring against dogmatism and sectarianism, and of an even more debauched censure against **revisionism**.

What is revisionism? It is the negation of what the untouchable corpus of eninis had engraved in granite, which had been concealed for forty years in the drawers of its depositories, the Germans, and that Lenin brought back to the revolutionary light of triumph; as in these very pages it is reconsecrated for the centuries to come.

That historical, famous concealment of the doctrine tables enabled the **placid sunsets** socialists to mock the infantile and petty-bourgeois revolutionarism of anarchists who, although maintaining that the state form and social framework of exploitment would have collapsed after an imaginary battle, were the only ones to understand, during that nineteenth-century interval, that the proletariat would have destroyed the state and founded a stateless society.

Lenin describes once more the solution of Marx. It is a very simple one. One **general battle** will not be sufficient, if we don't want the society to die of starvation, as the economical structure evolves in a rhythm that can be accelerated, but not to the extent of having an instantaneous transformation. But this coldly «scientifical» argument does not mean that the revolutionary party does not expect and want the **catastrophe**. The general and decisive battle will take place, but it won't mark the end, starting from the

next day, of both mercantile economy and the state. Here appears the fundamental function of dictatorship; revisionists, who revised Marx's prophecy of the catastrophe, imprisoned the discovery of proletarian dictatorship, for which the French masses, almost devoid of doctrine in the scholastic sense, had already fought three times.

The economy will have the necessary time (the longest time in Russia, said Lenin «it was easier for us to **start**, it will be easier for you to **continue**» - all but **model** and **guide**!), but we'll have today's class state blown up in the first day: from the next day, we'll have our ruling class state; dictatorship; economical evolution until classless communism. How long a time? Even fifty years in Russia, said the great eninism s, but maybe ten years in Europe, if the dictatorship will win there. Meantime, the state will pass away.

What therefore is revisionism, killer of the same eninis that is resuscitated by eninism? It is gradualism in both **economy and politics**, the idea of a course in which violence and class terror are no longer characters of the historical tragedy. And in which the socialist economic gradualism begins under the capitalist state.

Isn't therefore the infamous manifesto of Moscow 1960 exactly revisionism? Isn't it **gradualism** (which once again triumphs over Marx and Lenin, bound together in an historical tomb of oblivion) the perspective according to which – even without another world war, as expected by Joseph Stalin – a sort of polite plebiscite of the whole world population, after a succession of **examples to be admired** and **models** to be **imitated**, will smoothly lead the fake socialist system to spread step by step on the other side.

As Marx and Lenin hated the cowardly palinody of pacifists, in the same way this one must be cursed; being the most foul evolutive outlook of humanity's life. If war really threatens it like a catastrophe, the dialectics of Marx and Lenin (which we know we are the only ones able to follow) points out that the only salvation lies **in the theory of the catastrophe**: where the glorious flame of the civil war overwhelms the coexistent and emulative league of exploiters and traitors.

# Chapter VII: Appendix on the Italian Issues

#### Subject of the Present Final Note

We don't believe it right to give some space to the Italian issues, which were debated within the Communist International in the first post-war period, just because they (and the way the International settled them) were at the centre of the discussion that, after Lenin and after 1920, became always more deep. The most important point, then and today, is that of the international communist tactics and, within a wider historical setting, of the revolutionary strategy in Europe and outside; this is the point on which, after forty years, we can and must draw conclusions. The complete revolutionary bankruptcy in the western capitalist countries demonstrates how the usage of Lenin's watchword about «flexibility» degenerated in abuse, similar to that ascribed by Lenin to the traitors of his time, like Kautsky and partners. We explained the historical motives according to which Lenin believed urgent **in that moment** to insist more against the danger of **rigidism** than against that of too much **flexibilism**. We, when daring to give more

importance to the latter danger, and to too many concessions to it, we were for the safety [of the **party**; Lenin was concerned about the safety] of the **European** revolution, without which he knew that the **Russian** one was lost. We can say that his view was great, but those who blather about a today's revolutionary Russia cannot dare to say so.

It would be a poor thing to boast of the disastrous historical situation, after the sacrifice of both European and Russian revolutions, and the destruction of the world communist party. Cassandras were not sufficient for such a salvation.

The aim of our study on Lenin is to establish where the boundary is between the flexibility he proposed - which we do not hesitate to define **too broad** for the countries of modern, whorish democracy - and the filthy flexibility of 1920 traitors, who have been surpassed only by the present-day scoundrelish wave, which Lenin was fortunate enough not to know.

Here is another passage from the text:

«Only one thing is lacking to enable us to march forward more confidently and firmly to victory,» (here is the magnificent optimism of Lenin we were afraid of!) «namely, the thoroughly meditated awareness of all Communists in all countries, of the necessity to achieve the utmost «flexibility» in their tactics... That which happened to such leaders of the Second International, such highly erudite Marxists devoted to socialism as Kautsky, Otto Bauer and others, could (and should) provide a useful lesson. They fully appreciated the need for flexible tactics; they themselves learned Marxist dialectic and taught it to others...; however, **in the application** of this dialectic they committed such an error, or proved to be such undialectical in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms, that their fate is not more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde and Plekhanov.» (From the French translation; see also op. cit., p. 575).

The latter three passed to the defence of the country, the ultimate infamy for Lenin; but the fate of the former ones, of **centrists**, was no less disgusting (the reader can read again the preceding and following pages): to applaud, in the name of an alleged socialist orthodoxy, not only the insults, but even the bourgeois punitive expeditions of the time against the Russian soviets.

Is the fate of the drafters of the recent Moscow's manifesto a better one? They, too, with infinite shamelessness, start with Lenin's flexibility and Marx's dialectics. Where have they come to?

While Lenin wanted to teach that audacious tactical evolutions may be of help, provided that dialectics enables us not to forget the cornerstones, out of which to name him has no meaning whatsoever (and they are, according to every page of the text, **for all countries** proletarian dictatorship, destruction of the parliament), today an assembly of eighty seven swines write, invoking him: «The working class has the chance of turning the parliament, from an instrument of bourgeoisie's class interests, into an instrument at the service of the working people».

Flexibility of «acquisition of new content by the old forms»? Lenin-style flexibility, then?! Or rather a triple putrid content filling the new scoundreldom?

These are the terms, historical rather than doctrinarian, of the tactical matter the way we countryless communists call it.

And if Italy requires a mention, it is due to a secondary motive. First of all, Lenin writes about it, and secondly we are interested in demonstrating that the master-line of the communists of the Italian Left, even before knowing his works, was already the right one, the same he used to condemn both right- and left-wing doctrinairism; i.e., the **scoundreldom** of all times and the stammering petty-bourgeois **immediatism** which we had at that time already defeated within the national sphere.

**Class party, centralisation, discipline** are the cornerstones of the Russian victory, and Lenin calls them in as a theme before all the world's countries. It means a fight without quarter against the disorders (whether they come from right or left) of economism, labourism, workerism, syndicalism, non-politicalism, localism, autononism, individualism and libertarianism. It was easy to say that the Italian leftists, by advocating electoral abstentionism in 1919, were deviating from the marxist line; but it's true the contrary, and the demonstration does not lie in the theory, it is also in the not counterfeit practical facts.

#### From Bourgeois Unity to the First War

There's no shortage of histories of the Italian proletarian movement, although their consultation is made unsafe by the ideological position of the various writers, and the texts based only on documents are too ponderous. The present ones are just brief notes to get to 1920.

Anarchists (at that time called libertarian communists and united to marxists in the First International until 1871) cannot be denied the credit for having been the first to adopt the historical position according to which, once the struggles for national independence were over, no euphoria should spread among the Italian workers for the victory of the national, liberal bourgeoisie, their true social enemy, and yesterday's ally. It is clear that such an historical marxist position, as well as the theses as to which the next social clash was to be aggressive rather than defensive, and take the shape of insurrectional struggle and civil war; it might be defined as an attempt, insufficient in both theory and organisation, to pass at once from the victory of the bourgeoisie - yesterday's ally - to the struggle for power against it, as Marx wanted it in 1848, and as Lenin did it in 1917.

The struggles were local, regional, carried out by bands that weren't able to achieve their generous aim of assaulting the police headquarters of big cities; they were stopped in the countryside by the pitiless repression of the class bourgeois state. But the tradition of leftwing marxists cannot be connected to such conspiratorial and, in a sense, blanquist extremism. The correct position goes back to the letter of Engels to the «**Plebe**» of Pavia («**On authority**», 1873). The revolution does not just need bold men and arms, it needs a nationally centralised party organisation, able to act like a disciplined army of the civil

war, and to found a proletarian state when the bourgeois state is defeated. Since 1870 we have been correctly defined as **authoritarian communists**. It was a theoretical error (here's another demonstration that not doctrinairism, but rather the correctness even with regard to terminology and formulae, is a vital oxygen for the movement, always) to substitute the expression **authoritarian** with that of **legalitarian**. The latter became, in the final decades of the XIXth century, the praxis of the socialist parties, which saw what the present day swines (as just mentioned) see: elections and parliament as class means for seizing the power.

In 1892 the socialists split from anarchists at Genoa Congress: the formula of that programme is the «conquest of public powers». When, as in 1919 at Bologna Congress, we upheld that it was to be changed in order to be able to join the IIIrd International of Moscow, the old Lazzari tried to demonstrate that it did not exclude the insurrectional seizure of power: Verdaro answered him that he cared about such a programme, of which he had been a drafter. Lazzari in his life had long fought against reformists; but during the war we accused him, in 1917 and before, just as Lenin did with Kautsky; a Lazzari was by the way far more «to the left» than today's Kremlinians!

Between the two centuries, while the anarchists were reduced to the individualist school and to the attack method, the socialists of the whole of Europe were increasingly more, divided into the wings of reformists and revolutionaries . There's no need to repeat that the first ones were evolutionists, who repeated the doctrine of social revolution as the only way to socialism; while the second ones, although not clearly advocating the watchword of dictatorship, saw the parliamentary activity as just a means of agitation based on the class struggle, and even excluded any coalition with left-wing parliamentary oppositions, let alone the possibility of participating in parliamentary governments.

The issue of electoral intransigence was a quite small test in such an idyllic time, when nothing made foreseeable the impending outbreak of World War I. But nevertheless in Italy an advancement of the marxist left took place until 1914. It had a more remarkable success in the struggle against the participation to Freemasonry, and for the liquidation of the trite petty-bourgeois anticlericalism of the time. But a better confirmation of the **rightness** of the theory followed, in the sense that Lenin himself gives to such a word, came from the position assumed towards the revolutionary syndicalism, just arrived in Italy from the French school of Sorel and on which the anarchist tendencies had moved.

As a «left-wing infantile» reaction to the parliamentary and collaborationist degenerations of the socialist parties of that time, the sorelians denied both party and elections. They advocated both class violence and insurrection, but saw with the latter the end of the state. Direct action meant for them the clash between the proletariat, organised in the trade unions and by means of the arm of general strike, and the bourgeois state; which in the struggle was to disappear, according to the anarchist idea, without making way for a clear-cut workers' state.

The critique to such immediatist errors was thoroughly made by the left of the socialist party in the first decade of the century, when the syndicalists broke from both the party and the Confederazione del Lavoro. The right **form**, as suited to be filled in Lenin's sense by the revolutionary **content** is not the trade union, but rather the political party. In the

union is the category spirit to develop (worse still, in the syndicalism of factory councils, born later, it is the far more narrow factory spirit to develop): in the party alone the, unity of the struggle, not only national but also world-wide, can be achieved. To draw from the degeneration of the party and of its M.P.s the **non-political** and **non-party** conclusion, which more than the **«non-electionist**» one leads to renunciation of the revolutionary dynamics (that is political, because the armed struggle between classes is political par excellence): that's «infantilism». The trade unions themselves had degenerated in the worst minimalism of small gains and caused the parliamentary degeneration, but it did not justify such a unionist split. These positions, appeared in the IIIrd International after the war, were already clear beforehand for us in Italy.

The party issue, as well as that of the state, was fully called into question. Syndicalists boasted to be anti-state; they were several times answered in the journals of the youth movement that we too, revolutionary socialists, were against the state, in the sense of overthrowing the present power and ending the state, provided that, in a new form, it had served the proletariat in the period of social transformation. As an example it might be mentioned a speech by Franco Ciarlantini, who developed such a theme at the Ancona Congress, although it did not yet appear as **topical**.

## The War of 1914

The story is well known, even to the youngest. The behaviour of the socialist party in Italy was quite different from what took place in France, Germany, Austria, England. It was due to the fact that Italy was involved only nine months later; but we can quite rightly say that, as for the Russian bolshevik party, the previous historical struggle of the marxist left wing against right and left doctrinarian errors (reformists and anarchists, that we always defined as two aspects of the petty- bourgeois error) had a useful effect. One of our articles in **«Avanti!»** of 13th July, 1913 fought with such an approach against the abstentionists from the then impending political elections, with the very title: **«**Against abstentionism».

The rising within the same party, which in its great majority was against the war, of a dangerous and centrist tendency was at once noticed; it is witnessed by articles in **«Avanti!»** (although it was under censure), and by contrasts in the meetings of Rome 1917, Florence 1917, etc., where the extreme wing was clearly differentiated. Whoever reads such articles can see how, even before the publication of the theses of Lenin-Zinoviev and of the international meetings of Zimmerwald and Kienthal, the theses of the international split were outlined, within the «non-traitor» Italian party itself.

The rightist formula of accepting, after May 1915, the fait accompli of the war intervention and of going into a work of «civil red cross», while the rightists were harshly hammered for their defencist attitudes after the Austrian invasion at Caporetto was not just condemned; the party leadership itself was disclaimed for its dubious formula: «neither support nor sabotage», while wartime revolutionary defeatism was advocated before Lenin himself gave such a watchword.

In an article of Nov. 1914 we were already speaking of «a new international with the maximum communist programme». In May 1917 the loft rose up against a motion of the leadership, according to which the situation had changed (the usual **turning**-

**points** disorder!) owing to the war message of Wilson, which closely followed his peace message, and to the downfall of the tsar in Russia, which cleaned out the «democratic» content of the western imperialist side. Serrati was since then concerned about us wanting a «split», against which he fought in 1919 and 1921, that is in the crucial moment.

### The 1919 Congress

Very interesting materials, as proof of what we're going to say, can be found in the reports of the P.S.I. (Italian Socialist Party) congress of Bologna October1919, a very rare book at present. In all the speeches of the communist abstentionist fraction - which gathered a minority if compared to the maximalist fraction, by far prevailing, and to the reformists, who named their fraction with the usual words of unity or concentration - two points are thoroughly dealt with: that of party unity, now an obstacle for the eager to struggle proletariat, and that of the imminent general elections which, as we had warned, channelled all class energies on the legalitarian plane: a non-hybrid party would instead have been able to lead the class to immense achievements.

The split issue was rejected by the electionist maximalists, because they did not want to wreck the election campaign. It is now opportune to make a very important fact public. In the public session we acknowledged that the motion of the maximalist fraction (serratian, joined at that time by Bombacci, Gennari, Graziadei, Gramsci and by all those who at Leghorn in 1921 were to come on our side) had been made, in its programmatic and theoretical part, much closer to ours, which fully kept to the platform of the IIIrd International; the only remaining differences were on the participation to elections and on the exclusion from the party of those who rejected the new programme. Without referring to the decisions of 1920 congress, which ratified the split (although speaking in favour of the participation to the parliament), there's a fact which is of course missing in the official report. Before the vote the leaders of the abstentionist fraction made a move to meet the maximalists, by proposing a united vote on condition that the split from the turatian right was decided. On such terms we would have given up, even before the international congress, the abstentionist condition. Well, this move was immediately **rejected**: not only they wanted the elections, they wanted also the biggest success, to be achieved together with the electoral forces of Turati & Co. It was clear that serratism did not see the parliamentary action, as Lenin did in 1920, with the purpose of demolition but, in a social-democratic style, it dreamed to achieve, after the war and the proletarian anger, a majority victory for the Lower House. Oh poor ghost of the good Serrati! Ho many sorts of things you heard, first from us and then from Gramsci and his men, until you sprinkled your head with ashes at Moscow-Canossa! Who would have said that in 1960's swines international serratism would have triumphed?

The issue of the split between the followers of the communist programme and the followers of the socialdemocratic programme was more important than that of Italian election and parliamentarism; yet, the latter marked the defeat of the proletarian forces in Italy, and the fascist victory of the bourgeoisie.

We set the split issue by invoking the tragic examples of the revolutions in Germany, Bavaria, Hungary. The text of the speeches of Verdaro, Boero and of all our other speakers demonstrates that we pointed out that in those struggles - as well as in the victorious one in Russia - the opponents of the communist programme of proletarian dictatorship, at the moment of the clash that all agreed was incumbent in Italy, had gone over to the bourgeoisie's side. We reminded of the telegram of Lenin, calling for the exclusion of socialdemocrats from the Hungarian communist government of Bela Kun, that the bourgeois press had published before the fatal ruin of Budapest soviets. We had not yet read at that time the text of «'Left-wing' communism», which develops the same tragical example and the same diagnosis of the causes; but the two were nevertheless **in tune**.

After the vote of Bologna we did not leave the party, and disciplinedly participated in the elections, as we were to do later on, after the Moscow congress in 1920 and the constitution on that basis of the Communist Party of Italy at Leghorn, in 1921. All this demonstrates that our behaviour, far from being affected by doctrinarian rigourism, was indeed «flexible». But just because we're not doctrinarian, we can today rightfully wonder which were the final results of the manoeuvre of the proletarian party. What we upheld in Bologna, and then in Moscow in 1920, was the impossibility of a parliamentary participation without a relapse into the socialdemocratic conception of the parliamentary seizure of power, as opposed to the revolutionary one. Don't real facts prove today that such an expectation was correct?

It is worth now going back to the text of Lenin. His conception of tactics shows us a party that is able to be non-rigid in two senses: when it is a matter of approaching a manoeuvre , the «form» of which is that of an apparent compromise with forces more or less distant from us, and when it is the matter of carrying out the **opposed** strategic move, going back with even more decision on the position of direct attack against all enemies. Whoever successfully carried out both manoeuvres can boast an understanding and dialectical enforcement of Lenin's legacy. But what has been the outcome? Nobody has made a brief excursion into the method of parliamentary action, to later **switch back**, with a doubled vigour, to the method of revolutionary attack. The movement instead deeply immersed itself, and totally trapped, in the democratic idolatry and in the parliamentary practice. Lenin instead explained that the force of the bolsheviks lay in their ability of enforcing with the same energy the tactics of their presence in the Duma as well as that of the boycott of it. In Bologna Verdaro had already answered to such an objection by saying that the participation in a reactionary Duma, the members of which were sent to Siberia, was obvious. However, this is the instance in which Lenin justifies the «boycott».

When in August 1905 the tsar convoked a consultive parliament the bolsheviks, unlike all other opposition parties and the mensheviks, proclaimed the boycott of such a parliament, and the 1905 revolution actually wiped it out. At that time the boycott was right, not because it is in general right not to participate in reactionary parliaments, **but because the objective situation had been correctly evaluated, and it was of such a nature, as to rapidly turn the wave of category strikes into a political general strike, then into a revolutionary strike, and finally into an insurrection.** 

On the basis of these words of Lenin, who also defines the boycott of 1906 and 1907 as an error because the situation had **cooled down**, we feel like making an accurate comparison with the Italian situation in the post-war 1919. Not doctrinairism then, but true exam of the situations, which they always accused us not to be able and willing to do;

while our thesis is that situations can only be well evaluated when we follow a nonchangeable theory.

## **Reality of the Italian Post-War Period**

The war ended in 1918 had been very hard for the proletariat, much more than that of 1940-45, although its outcome was a national victory rather than a defeat. After leaving on the Carso, in the course of twelve mad battles, six hundred thousand corpses, the Italian soldiers made a military strike at Caporetto; only foreign events, as is the tradition for the glories of the greedy and the faint-hearted Italian bourgeoisie, had reversed the final outcome of the war. The socialist party, which had been greatly opposed to it, was enormously popular within the masses - that popularity was however saved when we of the left prevented the parliamentarians from getting involved in socialpatriotism, towards which they leaned in 1917.

As far as elections were concerned, it was certain that the polls would have meant a defeat for the interventionist fascist groups, a filthy rabble of former pro-Austrian nationalists, freemasons, republicans, mussolinists and other dregs of the socialist movement. Against them was not only the hatred of workers, but even the bourgeoisie, which feared the class anger and tried to get rid of the responsibilities for the war, by boasting the opposition to it of Giolitti, Nitti (great organiser of the elections, called for autumn 1919), and of the Popular Party, today's Christian Democrats. This fact laid the foundations of the bourgeois fascist revenge, which had to give itself an extraparliamentarian struggle programme. What we said at Bologna shows how we expected such an outcome for the Italian situation: fascism had a good chance and won out because we proletarians passed with all our forces on the legalitarian ground, while we were at that time the strongest in the streets. Nitti, Giolitti, Bonomi did the rest, as history tells.

We were the strongest, not only because a wave of category economic strikes had wonderfully started, but also because the workers' masses felt that the results would have been meagre and precarious unless we moved to the political action (series of Lenin: general political strike, revolutionary strike, insurrection for the seizure of power). At Bologna we spoke of the new-born fascism to pose the leninist dilemma: proletarian dictatorship or bourgeois dictatorship: which was the same in the whole of Europe. But we yelled that the revolutionary party was necessary.

The situation was at that time as follows: fascists, exinterventionists, while running off in the streets, reacted with propaganda by saying that ours, the reds, booed the veterans and stripped the disabled ex-servicemen of their ribbons. To such an extent was the right proletarian resentment against the war: today, with the same hypocritical affectation, the decorated veterans of all wars - of the first one, of the second (the fascist one) and of the partisan war - are raised to great honour. Both industrialists and landowners, hit by the wave of economical strikes, were in clear cahoots with the first fascist provocations; and the police, although obeying Nitti - called Cagoia by D'Annunzio at Fiume -, was preparing to the easy evolutions as to which both cops and army let the fascist bands have it their way until August 1922, in spite of democracy, just master of its imbecile parliament.

Then the decision was to be taken; when the great waves of class movements, such as the occupation of factories in 1920, were still to come. It was soon after the end of the war that the party should have been purged, while summoning in the decisive turning-points of Party Leadership, Parliamentary Group and Confederazione del Lavoro, which most times castrated the strikes, should have been terminated.

To want the great ballots saturnalia in 1919 meant to remove the obstacles on the way of fascism which, while the astonished masses were waiting for the parliamentary test, was preparing to give those who had outraged the alleged heroes of the bourgeois war in the squares of Italy tit for tat.

The victory of the 150 socialists M.P.s was paid for with the **ebb** of the insurrectional wave, of the general political strike, of the economical conquests themselves, and the bourgeois class as a whole - including the middle and petty-bourgeois, real wormhole of fascism, yesterday and today, in Italy and elsewhere - won its game against us. At Leghorn it was late for the split, and even more tardy was, after the march on Rome, the hope to retrieve with Serrati the socialist party, the **«Avanti!»**, etc., - but all this is off the present subject.

In a recent petty writing of «**Unità** », with a bowdlerised history of the Communist Party of Italy, it is mentioned that at a certain moment (after Bologna but before Leghorn), in the face of one of the many boycotts of a very well started movement of Turin's proletariat which should have been supported throughout Italy, the Turin section of the abstentionist fraction (local majority) turned to the Central Committee of the fraction in order that the immediate split and the foundation of the communist party were decided. The **Ordine Nuovo** group was perhaps beginning to understand what an enormous error had it been to vote at Bologna for the unity for the elections.

We have been asked many times why we did not split at Bologna.

We mentioned that Lenin himself would not have been surprised by such a split. In his writing on «'Left-wing' communism», he speaks twice (in a footnote and in the appendix) about the Italian abstentionists, and says that they are wrong in not wanting to go the parliament, but also that they are the only ones to be right when they demand the split from the reformists, from the Italian Kautskyites, and he confirms it with great force. If we say that he would have liked for us an anticipated split, it is because of a passage at the very beginning of the Appendix, titled: «The Split Among The German Communists». Here is the passage (translated from a text of 1920) with our brief remarks.

# **Unity or Split?**

«The split among the Communists in Germany is an accomplished fact. The «Lefts» or the «opposition on principle», have formed a separate Communist Workers' Party, as distinct from the Communist Party. A split also seems imminent in Italy - I say «seems», as I have only two additional issues (Nos. 7 and 8) of the Left newspaper, «**Il Soviet**», in which the possibility of a split is openly discussed, and mention is also made of a congress of the «Abstentionist» group (i.e., opponents of participation in parliament), which group is still part of the Italian Socialist Party.» (op. cit., p. 577) The date of this note is May 12, 1920, and the mentioned issues of «Il Soviet» are of March. The conference that Lenin calls congress took place in Florence in the spring, and took no decisions about the split but waiting for the International's decisions. If it was right or wrong, means nothing; these were the facts.

«There is reason to fear that the split with «Lefts», the anti-parliamentarians (often antipoliticals too, who are opposed to any political party and to work in the trade unions)» - (Lenin learnt **later** that we Italian lefts were not against the political and trade unions work) - «will become an international phenomenon, like the split with the «Centrists» (Kautskyites, Longuetists, Independents, etc.). Let that be so. **At all events**, **a split is better than confusion, which hampers the ideological, theoretical and revolutionary growth and maturing of the party, and its harmonious, really organised practical work paves the way for the dictatorship of the proletariat. « ( op. cit. , p. 577)** 

The text goes on prophesising that such a split would be followed by a fusion - as opposed to the split towards the right - into a single party (the formula is repeated twice in the same terms at the end of the paragraph) of all participants in the working-class movement **who stand for soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat**.

What do the swines of Moscow's conference think today about the «split», after boasting of having faithfully followed the way of leninism?

«The main obstacle that opposes the struggle of the working class to achieve its aims» (dictatorship is no longer among them, violence is replaced by the **peaceful way**, or by **with no civil war**, and soviets by the conquest of parliaments) «**keeps being** the split within its ranks». («**Unità** » Dec. 6, 1960, p.8)

Thence a very warm appeal for an alliance, not with the centrists, but with the open rightwing socialdemocrats follows. The above for the parties; as to classes, the appeal is extended, even internationally, to the middle bourgeoisie. That's the 1961 usage of the classical Left-wing communism of Lenin!

#### The Ordine Nuovo Immediateism

The danger that Lenin in 1920 had to describe with the expressions, thence become classic, of infantilism and left-wing doctrinairism, culminates in not acknowledging that the revolutionary content must fill of itself two typically **political** and **central** forms: the class party and the class state. It is precisely infantile and anti-historical that position which, from the fact that the political parties (not just the bourgeois but even the workers' ones) had in 1914 assumed an actually anti-revolutionary content, draws the conclusion of the **rejection of the party**: as it was the case for Germany's extremists. A similar error would be that of inferring from the anti-revolutionary function of the bourgeois state the decision of rejecting the state form (a traditional mistake of libertarians). The same error would be made by whoever infers, after the demonstration of the Russian state degeneration, that Lenin (and Marx) was wrong in advocating the authoritarian form of the revolution.

What has always been called the real unity (more qualitative than quantitative) of the proletarian struggle «in time and space» can only be achieved by a party - which does not mean any party.

Only on a political basis one can go beyond the differences of situations and interests of the factory, category and industry groups, of the local, regional and national groups, although their statistical sum total constitutes, in a cold estimate, the class. Only on a political and party basis the momentary and transient interests of proletarian groups and of the whole class, both nationally and internationally, can be subordinated to the general historical progress of the movement, as to the classic definition of Engels.

The group called **Ordine Nuovo**, depicted by an organised propaganda as a genuinely marxist and leninist current, was born during WW 1 from such basic errors.

The detail of this political account explains why since 1920 the Communist International considered that group as orthodox. Owing to the polemics on the parliamentary action, at the IInd Congress they wondered if there was in Italy a trend in agreement with the International, which had also accepted its direction on the split. The Turin group (it wasn't then nationally spread) wasn't represented in Moscow; the representative of abstentionists himself impartially reported on it, and explained what the movement of factory councils and the review **Ordine Nuovo** were. The theses published by the review, which therefore took its name, had come from an agreement in Turin between the majority of abstentionist workers and the review's group of young intellectual students. The parts on the defects of the Italian party and on the necessity of a split were a contribution of abstentionists, who had been maintaining them since 1919.

But this is no moment for chronicle. The development of that time and what followed enable us to see that the scheme, which we call of Gramsci for simplicity, had the nonmarxist but rather immediatist nature of a left-wing petty-bourgeois position.

The **Ordine Nuovo** outlook rose from a tendency of young intellectuals who, until then alien to both the parties and the proletariat, looked at the efficient Turin workshops from the outside and, far from being able to see them as the prisons they were for Marx, considered them as a model to which the whole «backward» Italy of that time should have been referred. It is likewise labourism the outlook of the pure wage labourer who sees the workshop from the inside, and believes the conquest and management of it being his class end, unable to see the intermingling of connections with the whole world which make the final struggle between the world dictatorship of capital and the world dictatorship of the proletariat his class task. The labourism of those bright and studious youth was an «extroverted» and really immediatist one. They saw the worker as a zoological social species, fraught with particular metamorphoses; they did not yet think that within the class party - whatever deviations it may have had - the comrade, the militant has the same importance, irrespectively of his birth; and only such a party, as divined by Marx, represents the class, makes it a class, and leads it to rule in order to destroy all classes, and itself.

In Gramsci's system - the starting point of which is not the excommunication of the imperialist war, as given by Lenin and by those who really were with him, but rather a

position that had the same features of that of Mussolini, and supported the democratic war - the way to eliminate the defects of the trade unions' confederation and of the socialists party didn't lie in sorting out the latter and then in struggling to conquer the former. The two structures were to be emptied and abandoned, to be substituted by a new one, the new order, the system of factory councils.

The hierarchy of such an elegant utopia is thoroughly outlined: from the worker to the shop, to the shop steward, to the committee of factory stewards, to the local council of factories and so on to the top. This new structure assumes, in each factory, first the right to **control**, then that of management; a sort of expropriation of the capital through basic cells, an old pre-marxist idea that has nothing of historical or revolutionary.

The party doesn't matter, and therefore its evolution, epuration or traumatic split, national and international, are given no importance.

The state doesn't matter either, as the realistic view of the central struggle for the power is lacking, and the transformation of the society is imagined as made piece by piece; and the pieces are the productive enterprises. The outlook of the features of the communist society as opposed to those of capitalism are totally lacking. Only a dim «factoryism» is left.

All the exigencies shown with extreme urgency by **«'Left-wing' communism**», which has been here our theme, were still to be fulfilled by the **Ordine Nuovo** movement. It has gone through an old historical path, since the day when Gramsci, at the clandestine meeting of Florence in November 1917, drunk in the debate without intervening but with the intense expression of his eyes, until the subsequent involution of the Russian and international movement, which perhaps surprised him no less in the last years of his life.

This cycle, far beyond the names and the persons, ended in a way that was easy to foretell, and it was indeed foretold; the false classical labourism totally failed - especially as to the dubious ententes during the twenty years of fascism and the Second World War - in the idea of fecundating with the culture of a bourgeois **intelligentsia** the proletarian force; the latter being an original one, immiscible with the vestiges of a philosophical, redeemer of spirits idealism; and such a sad course led to a ruinous submission to the impotent fashions of the middle class and to the most rancid and antiquated petty-bourgeois fetishisms, of the grandiose power of action and doctrine that forty years ago had in Moscow its vanguard and its bright banner.

The present-day surrogates of the great guiding principles of Marx and Lenin are not the result of a forty years long march forward, but rather the contemptible rehash of two centuries old superstitions, as well as of foolish parroting, if compared to their true greatness in their own historical moment.

Peace, democracy, nationality, an undefinable demo-economism! We allegedly had stood still for forty years while they enriched and updated the tables of Marx and Lenin?! No, for heaven's sake, these scoundrels of today are the most diehard and reactionary collectors of past garbage history has ever seen. They are the most evident symptom of the degenerative and recoiling phase this infamous bourgeois world is going through; they are the main force that has indecently delayed its decline.