

Passion and Algebra

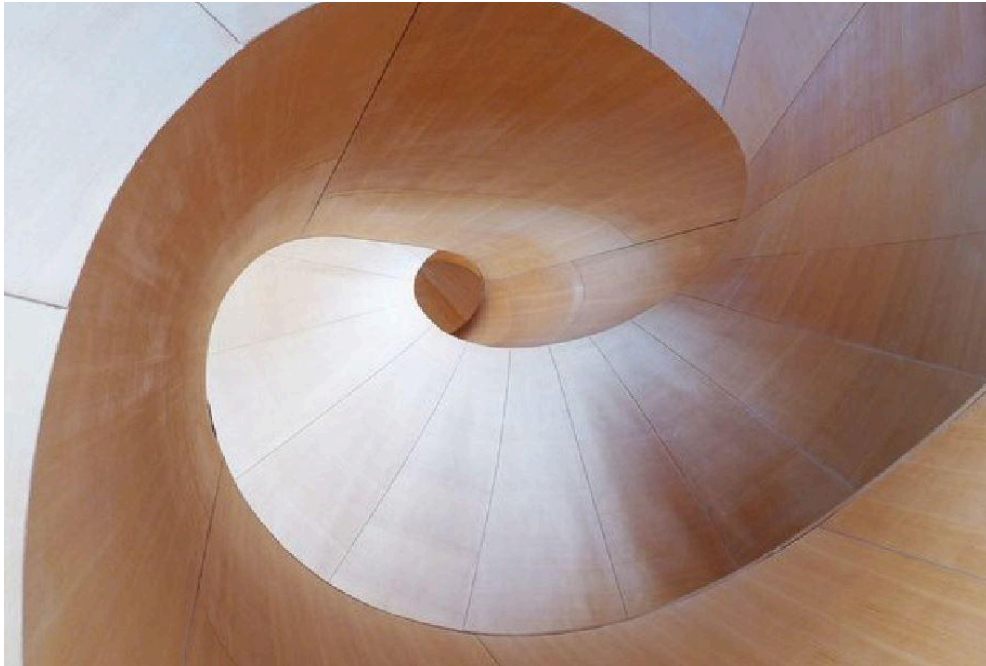
Amadeo Bordiga and the Science of Revolution

Published by Quinterna N+1

First Edition 1994

Second Edition 2018

Translated by Balance y Avante from Italian to English in 2024



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Premise

"I say that the human intellect understands some of them (propositions) so perfectly, and has such absolute certainty of them, as if it had the same nature; and such are the pure mathematical sciences, that is, geometry and arithmetic, of which the divine intellect knows countless more propositions, because it knows them all, but of those few understood by the human intellect I believe that the knowledge equals the divine in objective certainty, since it reaches the understanding of the necessity, over which there seems to be no greater certainty." - Galileo 1630

"Natural science will in time incorporate into itself the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate into itself natural science: there will be one science." - Marx 1844; Private Property and Communism

"The offensive action of the party is conceivable only when the reality of the economic and social situation throws the masses into a movement aimed at solving the problems directly related, on the widest scale, to their conditions in life; this movement creates unrest which can only develop in a truly revolutionary direction on the condition that the party intervenes by clearly establishing its general aims, and rationally and efficiently organising its action, including the military technique.

(...)

One can create neither parties nor revolutions; one leads the parties and the revolutions, by unifying all the useful international revolutionary experiences in order to secure the greatest chances of victory of the proletariat in the battle which is the inevitable outcome of the historical epoch in which we live. This is what seems to us to be the necessary conclusion." - Bordiga 1921; Party and Class Action

"Herzen said that the Hegelian doctrine is the algebra of revolution. This definition can be transferred with greater right to Marxism. The materialistic dialectics of the class struggle, this is the true algebra of the revolution. In the arena visible to the external eye, chaos, the flood, the formless and the unlimited reign. But this chaos is calculated and measured. Its phases are foreseen. The regularity of their succession is anticipated and contained in steel formulas. In elemental chaos there is an abyss of blindness. But in directive politics there is clarity and vigilance. The revolutionary strategy is not formless like an elementary force, but complete like a mathematical formula. For the first time in history we see revolutionary algebra in action." - Trotsky 1922

"In the decisive part of its dynamics (knowledge) it takes its start in the form of an intuition, an affective, non-demonstrative knowledge. It comes after intelligence with its calculations, its accounts, its demonstrations, its proofs. But novelty, the new conquest, the new knowledge, does not need proof, it needs faith! It does not need doubt, it needs struggle! It does not need reason, it needs strength! Its content is not called Art or Science, it is called Revolution!" - Bordiga 1960

Concentrating Bordiga's sixty years of revolutionary militancy in a pamphlet is a difficulty, but not the biggest one. It is also difficult to remain faithful to his classic recommendation not to turn the militant party into a biography character, which would be a bit like turning him into what Lenin called an inoffensive icon.

To be faithful to Bordiga's directives, one should therefore not write specifically about him, but that would be like writing about a process without naming the instrument that carries it out. It would be like talking about the October Revolution without naming Lenin.

We shall try here to treat the subject as he treated it, precisely, when speaking of Lenin in a memorable lecture given at his death in 1924

"I must preface this with two caveats; I do not propose to follow the line of official commemorations and I will not make a biography of Lenin, nor will I tell a series of anecdotes about him. I will attempt to trace from a historical and critical Marxist point of view the figure and task of Lenin in the revolutionary emancipation movement of the world working class; these syntheses are only possible by looking at the facts with a broad perspective of the whole, and not by descending to the analytical, journalistic, often gossipy and insignificant detail. I

do not believe that it gives me the right to speak on Lenin by mandate of my party to be 'the man who saw Lenin' or who had the good fortune to speak with him, but to have participated, since I am one of the militants of the proletarian cause, in the struggle for the very principles that Lenin personifies (...).) Secondly, given the vastness of the subject proposed to me, as well as being necessarily incomplete, I shall have to pass quickly over questions of primary importance and rely on the fact that the terms are already known to the comrades listening to me: there is no field in the problems of the revolutionary movement which has no relation to Lenin's work" - Lenin nel cammino della rivoluzione, in 'Prometeo' n. 3 del 15 marzo 1924. Reprint Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1983.

We write the following text to be faithful to the same spirit. The greatest difficulty, in writing today, is that Bordiga was addressing an assembly composed of adherents of the proletarian movement that had actually touched upon the possibility of world revolution, whereas we write for readers three or four generations removed from the last revolutionary peak in Europe. We equally rely, as Bordiga says, on the fact that the reader is sufficiently nauseated by current society and the workings of opportunism to feel the connection between our current and the great events of that time. Only in this way, even without a thorough knowledge of the details of the theory of value or the questions of historical and dialectical determinism, can the reader feel that this link is also indispensable for the future revolution. After all, we are going to explain the past precisely so that new generations can equip themselves for the future.

Our 'non-biography' begins with an attempt to explain the scientific basis of Bordiga's theoretical elaboration. This is important because we need a historical explanation of the formation of a revolutionary communist current, the 'Italian' one, which broke away from and overcame the limits of the Third International as early as the 1920s. The identification of these limits does not at all mean disavowing the greatness of the results achieved up to its Second Congress, nor does it mean denying its necessity in the troubled affirmation of the anti-capitalist revolution. The exhaustion of the historical function of the Communist League was already emphasised by Marx in 1860, and it is precisely this fact that makes necessary the formation of the First International and the further succession of forms in which the historical revolutionary party manifests itself and acts. This is why Marx's same discourse applies to the Second International and the Third.

So why Italy? If one were to say: capitalism was born in Italy a thousand years ago with its already state, international, imperialist characteristics, and therefore it was logical that the first movement tending to realise the One World Party of the proletariat was born here too, one would certainly be making a simplification. On the other hand, this simplified observation cannot be disregarded to arrive at a more organic explanation of the fact that only in Italy

a current was formed that understood the International as a Single World Party and not as a federation of autonomous national parties.

Neither in Germany, nor in England, nor in France did this happen and the proletarian parties in these countries had an enormous weight in the failure of the Third International when the Russian party had to succumb under the weight of the social determinations of backward Russia. Only the Communist Party of Italy (the adjective 'Italian' was avoided on purpose) correctly understood Lenin's call as soon as he arrived through Germany in the special train:

'Dear comrades, soldiers, sailors and workers, I am happy to greet the victorious Russian revolution in you, to greet you as the vanguard of the world revolutionary army... The revolution accomplished by you has ushered in a new epoch. Long live the world socialist revolution!' - L. Trotsky 1969; Storia della rivoluzione russa, Mondadori

When Lenin arrives at the Finland Station in Petersburg, he expresses the synthesis of a scientific analysis of the Russian revolution that needs the international revolution to win. When Bordiga impersonates the battle against the degeneration of the International he expresses the mathematical conditions necessary to arrive at the world party, the only condition for world revolutionary victory. Lenin has behind him a revolution that began in the weakest link, the least secure place to achieve a quick victory; Bordiga has behind him the material conditions necessary for the continuation of the revolution, that is, he is in the safest place to find all the ingredients of the most mature capitalism. Bordiga's theoretical background is formed in a country that did not even have the need for an anti-feudal revolution for the simple reason that feudalism had long since disappeared if it had ever existed in its classical form. It studied the texts of a lucid and efficient bourgeois intelligentsia, while at the same time fighting against the degenerate and corrupt politics of the outdated bourgeoisie that infected the proletarian organization with its survival.

There is a fundamental difference between the French and Italian revolutionary bourgeoisie that is only partly due to the century that separates them. The Enlightenment revolution is a machine of destruction for the old feudal order; but if its political greatness lies in this destruction, its economic limitation lies in the need to liberate the market and distribute land to the peasants. In Italy, the national revolution took place in the presence of a capitalism that was not only developed from a mercantile point of view; as in England, the dominant mode of agrarian conduction was already capitalist, one need only look at the great Renaissance estates, the Venetian estates and those of the southern 'latifundia'. The revolutionary party no longer has before it the realisation of the demands implicit in the Enlightenment, as in the first Russian revolution, but the battle against a pragmatic bourgeoisie, whose leading exponent in the administrative field is not so much a philosopher innovator as an

engineer, an organiser, a rationaliser of the existing for the aim of social conservation.

From the birth of the Left to the advent of fascism, Bordiga fights against the notion that there is still something to be achieved in capitalism, a democracy to be achieved, rights for workers to be won on the road to revolution. He advocates total revolution. His masters at the polytechnic and the leading Italian scientists of his time had extremely clear ideas about the nature of the subject matter they dealt with and, anticipating later trends, included multiple disciplines in their studies. One could not talk about Bordiga, a powerful synthesiser of all disciplines in Marxism, without talking about the era and environment that shaped him. This is true for everyone, but epochs of revolution forge their tools more sharply than in grey epochs such as ours.

We dedicate this work to young people who have never heard of the history of the Communist Party of Italy. Who only have at their disposal a history distorted by Stalinism and who have only heard of Gramsci and Togliatti at most. Who have not directly experienced the devastating actions of Stalinism but who experience its effects a-posteriori in the democratoid orgy, in the total homologation of the Stalinist remnants to the demands of the bourgeoisie.

Young readers will not find in the following pages a description of the character, a series of anecdotes about his life, which was also very rich, a subject for 'debate' or 'confrontation'. They will find study material elaborated by Bordiga as a militant of a revolution that puts social science at its basis and not the *politique politicienne* to which they are accustomed. It was not our intention to provide the complete 'catalogue' of 'Bordigist' topics and the topics have been chosen for an essential synthesis, trying not to fall into pedestrian didactics. With this aim, the most important elements that characterised the powerful theoretical continuation of Marx's and Lenin's work in Bordiga have been brought together.

1. The Roots and the Environment

Oreste Bordiga, Amadeo's father, was a professor of agricultural economics in Portici, near Naples. Of Piedmontese origin, a monarchist with liberal ideas, he had married Zaira degli Amadei, from an aristocratic Neapolitan family.

If original material factors mark individuals as they mark peoples, nations and classes, the young Amadeo could not help but absorb the tetragonous Cisalpine spirit, sweetened by a harmonious interweaving with southern

humanism. This is not, of course, meant to be a scientific thesis; the same determinations could have produced a tetragonal humanism, some kind of that grey and schematic sociology that today fuels much of the publishing business.

The fact remains that Bordiga undertook scientific studies and, as early as high school, he also demonstrated the oratory of a tribune, capable of nailing the attention of his classmates and attracting the attention of the police. The best Trotsky would say that there was a dialectical weld between passion and algebra.

We have the date of 1907 for the beginning of Bordiga's Marxist education. As he was born on 13th June 1889, he was eighteen years old. The police record in their archives, that the Marxist choice was due to the influence of a philosophy professor at the Portici school. In 1910, he joined the Socialist Party. In 1911 he began writing in the party press, in the same year that the newspaper of the Intransigent Revolutionary Fraction La Soffitta was founded. On the occasion of the first issue Rosa Luxemburg wrote a letter full of hope for the ferment within the party, which opposed the 'road that leads to the abyss'¹

The subtitle of the socialist journal Social Criticism was: Journal of Scientific Socialism, and the reformists had abolished that. The intransigents demanded a return to Marxism by recognising themselves in the full meaning of the title that had been put away in the 'attic'.

There is ferment against political corruption and opportunist degeneration, and this will be decisive for the young Bordiga. Lenin is also attentive to the Italian situation. The consequence of the intransigent battle is the exit, at the Reggio Emilia Congress of 1912, of Bissolati's ultrareformist wing. 'A split is a serious and painful thing, but sometimes it is necessary', Lenin was to write on that occasion.²

Bordiga would use this expression several times.

His enrolment at the polytechnic, a traditional breeding ground for engineers, will have its influence on his political formation. The engineer is a designer and builder, he works on a programme, i.e. with 'data from the future', on the basis of what exists, i.e. data from the past. We will find more than a trace of this in Bordiga's work. He despised the existentialism of the activists who sacrifice the future for the ephemeral success of the moment, just as he despised all sorts of out-of-date utopians, those who understood communism as an ideal model to which reality would adhere. In 1925, when the by that time Bolshevizing, workerist party, a theorist of organisation of factory cells, accused him of being, in addition to being an engineer, a dogmatic intellectual, removed far from the working class, he pointed out in an article in L'Unità, that the

¹ Rosa Luxemburg, *Socialist Renaissance*, 29 April 1911

² VI Lenin, *The Congress of Italian Socialists*

centrist leadership of the 'worker' party consisted of an absolute majority of lawyers and no workers. If one wanted to joke, he adds, it would be enough to point out that in a non-capitalist society engineers would always be indispensable and lawyers would be completely useless.³

The lawyers had the upper hand, as we know. Or rather, the counter-revolution had the upper hand, which used lawyers as the best interpreters of its programme.

In Bordiga's work, more or less recognisable references have been found here and there to the work of his agrarian economist father, or to the Neapolitan intellectual milieu to which he was a tributary on his mother's side. This is too limited an observation. Indeed, the formidable theoretical machine that was brewing in the future engineer's skull at the turn of the century was, as always, the concentrated expression of mature social phenomena. One finds in Bordiga's writings repeated references, at times serious and at times ironic, to the cultural melting pot that prepared and followed the Italian bourgeois revolution as a non-feudal revolution, therefore peculiar in Europe, and the bearer of capitalist phenomena to be studied with the utmost attention. These are elements that could be referred to Labriola from time to time.⁴ Cattaneo, Pisacane, Sella, Croce, De Sanctis, Nigra, just to remain among those born in the last century, but also to Galileo-Newton-Leibnitz, often quoted together; or Peano and Einstein, certainly studied in depth, given that, in Bordiga's work, concepts almost identical to theirs are found.

The great importance given by Bordiga in his work to the earth, to the environment, to human works that cover the earth's crust as past work, is not only rooted in his father's studies. It is present in the research of the Italian bourgeoisie during its national revolution, which, Bordiga recalls, was no joke,⁵ even if many bourgeois representatives, considered individually, were sloppy and hesitant.

The Italian revolutionary bourgeoisie established its national identity by recording a historical fact of fundamental importance: capitalism was born in Italy with the free Communes, the Maritime Republics, the merchant and banking Seignories. In Italy, capitalism has left a capillary testimony of past work in the cities, in the countryside, and in the relationship between city and country for almost a thousand years. The Italian bourgeois revolution was not an anti-feudal revolution: the relationship between city and country, however miserable the peasant was, was more similar to the English than the French.⁶

³ The nature of the Communist Party, in L'Unità of 26 July 1925

⁴ Antonio Labriola, not to be confused with Arturo, social democrat, repeatedly attacked by Bordiga as a renegade.

⁵ Filo: *Southernism and moralism*, in 'Programma Comunista', n. 20 and 21 of 1954

⁶ Thomas Moore *Utopia*, 1516

For Bordiga it was a matter of grasping this relationship in Marxist terms: the agrarian question does not only mean land, peasants, and landlords, as in the narrow 'feudalist' vision of the reformists and then the Stalinists. Above all, it means the theory of rent, i.e. the distribution of the surplus value produced in the capitalist cycle; it means modern mechanisms in line with the affirmation of monopoly in all fields, the root of social parasitism, and the bourgeois attempts to fight it or turn it socially to their own ends. In Italy, land has for centuries been the medium of open capitalist accumulation, not the closed feudal economy.

We find this observation, undeveloped, in Engels: England carried out its revolution without the need to expropriate land from the landlords who supported the Crown, because agriculture was already conducted capitalistically. Therefore the English still bore the cost of a monarchy as useless as it was ostentatious. In France it was instead necessary to crush it and distribute the fractional lands to the peasants. It was a true anti-feudal revolution, but the future was mortgaged with the weight of the peasant-owning masses, unable not to eat the produce of the land, and therefore less efficient in the accumulation process of capitalism.⁷

Bordiga drew on the knowledge that the revolutionary part of the Italian bourgeoisie had accumulated due to the historical peculiarity of the peninsula very early on (we find traces of this in his first articles on the Mezzogiorno, for example). References to the agrarian question of land settlement, to the peculiar urban forms, to the Italian ruling class in the formation of its national state, a class that was hypocritical and cowardly on the whole and yet, contradictorily, had good men, capable of uniting science and politics, recur frequently in his work.

Particularly dear to Bordiga's heart is the image of the revolution not as an isolated outbreak, but as the result of the continuous accumulation of events that has its resolution in a historical singularity, a true anticipation of the theory of catastrophes, summarised in a meeting in April 1951⁸. The accumulation is due to the work of man acting in history. No one is allowed, to become what he called a *batilocchio*⁹. To isolate himself from history and make believe that it is his own ideas that move it. No one is allowed to believe that the *battilocchio* is a factor in history as he claims to be. If anyone falls for it, as indeed happens to the vast majority of mankind, he is immediately demoted to the rank of 'underachiever'.

⁷ Filo: *The false era of the Elizabethans* (1953)

⁸ *Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine* (1951)

⁹ Term coined by Bordiga to indicate the character that the story throws into the limelight and who is believed (and is believed by everyone) to be a driver of the story itself.

Bordiga holds in the highest esteem the non-'underachieving' work of those who work 'for tomorrow's results', whatever class they belong to. He himself is one of these results, prepared by all those who, in Italy or elsewhere, have worked for pure capitalism or communist revolution, which are indifferent if the observer manages to place the historical phases in the right sequence.

Bordiga's theoretical background therefore consists of the considerable ferment of the Italian bourgeoisie in the period straddling its national revolution; a bourgeoisie that expresses, through certain eclectic and vastly cultured characters, the need to link every discipline in a global vision.

These characters, little known but on the whole representing personal rigour and austerity, the multiplicity of interests and the ability, if necessary, to fight, appealed greatly to Bordiga. They were not mere 'batilocchios', but hard-working carpenters building the arches of the bridge to the future. Because 'communism is not a doctrine but a movement, it does not move from ideas but from facts' and has as its premise 'the whole of previous history and above all its results in the major civilised countries'.¹⁰

Take for example the aforementioned Carlo Cattaneo. A Milanese, a proponent of science and technology as well as a military leader in the national revolution, he was a supporter of Galileo's scientific method, an expert on the social reality of the Italy of the Communes and the agrarian question linked to it (so much so that he compared it with the English agrarian economy). He was the founder, in early 1839, of a journal, *Il Politecnico*, a supporter of experimental science and a review of capitalist technical and social dynamics.

Take for example Francesco De Sanctis, from Avellino, a participant in the 1848 uprising with his students, Minister of Education at the proclamation of Unity and an outstanding literary critic who could confidently handle Hegel in the study of the relationship between literature and its historical foundations. Or Quintino Sella, Piedmontese, engineer, scientist, and weaver of the Unitarian State, a proponent of capitalist and cosmopolitan modernity, progenitor of that historical right that would take Italian capitalism to its extreme consequences, so well described and studied by Bordiga.

Rigour and multiplicity of interests were thus the basis of the formation of the young future leader of 'Italian' revolutionary communism. The rigour of the formulations, the lucidity of the exposition, and the iron logic with which Bordiga launched his criticism against his adversaries certainly had something to do with the method absorbed at the polytechnic; but it is not enough to be a young engineer to take this method to its extreme political consequences.

¹⁰ F. Engels, *The Communists and Karl Heinzen*

The young Bordiga certainly studied the dialectical method, not only borrowing it from reading Marx, but going back to Hegel and studying the reversal of his idealism into historical materialism. He later confirmed this in his commentaries on the Manuscripts of 1844 and in other texts, but it is certainly to his younger years that one must trace such an ironclad use of a critical method that goes beyond that of Lenin in Materialism and Empiriocriticism.

Bordiga was understood on the fly by a working-class audience even on topics considered 'difficult'. He despised 'culturalism', but refused to vulgarise Marxism and translate it into digest language, i.e. to 'reduce boulders to pills'. He was an exceptional orator, but he never dragged assemblies down with demagoguery or mere oratory: he convinced his listeners with the relentless sequence of logical-dialectical connections. What less rigorous comrades believed to be little manias turn out to be, on careful study, elements of a method that is by no means accidental, resulting from a harmonious integration of different disciplines:

'We believe in the revolution, not as the Catholic believes in Christ, but as the mathematician believes in the results of his research'.¹¹

We find, for example, in some of his arguments, precise references to linguistics, mathematics, physics, biology, etc. He rejected the approximate translations of the Stalinists and translated or had translated from the original everything from Marx that served for articles and meetings. He incited his comrades to the same rigour and urged everyone to give as little weight as possible to the 'thought' elaborated through their own ego, so as to avoid individualistic aberrations. He wanted everything to be written down in unambiguous terms and sincerely hated politicians who spoke offhandedly on matters that should instead be dealt with like algebra or geometry.

From this point of view, the student Bordiga was certainly influenced by the school that, starting with Galileo, is now trying to give an unambiguous answer to the problems posed by the apparent dichotomy between classical physics, i.e. the world of the laws of mass, motion, and energy, and the world of biological, environmental, social, etc. complexity, i.e. the world of becoming forms and change. The Italian scientific school at the turn of the century is full of contradictory examples of this attempt. On the one hand, a world that was not only academic but narrow and traditional, tied to conventions and its internal politics; on the other, first-rate research, not at all disconnected from the great currents of international science, influenced more or less consciously by the recent national revolution.

We do not know whether Bordiga read and directly studied certain authors who can be linked to some of his repeated statements, for example the concepts

¹¹ *Socialist idealism*, in 'L'Avanguardia' n.253, 11 August 1912.

of "organicity" as regards the structure of the party, and of "invariance" as regards the constants of social history in human production and reproduction derived from scientific studies and not only from contingent observations.

"Organicity" means the relationship between certain physical or social phenomena and the living organism, up to the so-called "holistic" conception of the investigation of phenomena. This conception is explicitly present in Bordiga's works. With it, we tend to eliminate the separateness of the parts and understand the organism (or the phenomenon) as a whole that is greater than the sum of the individual parts that compose it.

The term "invariance" has a broader meaning than appears at first glance. Invariant categories appear in the very concentrated third paragraph (*The method*) of Marx's 1857 *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, but the concept of "invariant" is also at the basis of mathematical, physical and natural sciences in general, and has been used to give the idea that every natural form or process can ultimately be traced back to a mathematical abstraction. With this concept it is assumed that qualitative phenomena can be translated into quantitative terms, therefore it is directly connected to the problem of knowledge of reality and the possibility of prediction¹². Some formulations in Bordiga closely resemble those of a contemporary Turin mathematician, Giuseppe Peano.

Peano was a theoretician of scientific rigour, inventor of the logical symbolism which is widespread today, and researcher of a universal language for science. Some of Peano's results also influenced the likes of Hilbert, Russell and Whitehead. Russel states for example that Peano was always clearer and more brilliant than other mathematicians in illustrating his positions. He deduced that this was due to the possession of a more rigorous logical formalization.

Bordiga is insistent on this point in many of his texts: clear "ideas" derive from a clear theoretical approach; the action becomes a natural consequence. Theory and action, that is, formalization and language, the "sign" that changes or causes things to change are inseparable. This unity of theory and action is also the cement of the party organism:

"The possession by the communist party of a critical method and a conscience that leads to the formulation of the program is a condition of its organic life." ¹³

¹² An important Italian mathematical school is contemporary with Bordiga and includes scholars such as Luigi Cremona, Guido Castelnuovo, Francesco Severi, Federigo Enriques, Corrado Segre. C. Segre is cited by Bordiga in the *Critique of Philosophy* meeting in 1960, where he is amazed at the 'new' epistemological results achieved in the author's transition from pure mathematics to mathematical physics. Traces of Enriques's epistemological research can be found in the same meeting and in other texts (need for convergence between philosophy and science; discontinuous process of knowledge, epistemological leaps). See *Critique of Philosophy*

¹³ *Thesis on tactics* , Rome, March 1922

Some lectures on Marx's *The Book of Capital* given to political prisoners in Ponza during the border years were enriched by an algebraic formalization that appeared between 1959 and 1960 and was called *Abaco*. In commenting on this formalization Bordiga reminds the party of the need to write, in addition to subsequent mathematizations of Marx's work, an international dictionary in at least four languages on Marxist terminology. It also notes that the dispute over the Bucharin-Luxembourg confrontation can only be resolved by stopping the chatting around, and building a formalisation of the problem of accumulation that eliminates the stratified diatribes over the years from the individualist debate between political figures. In the scientific community of the late century, Peano was a supporter of both the transformation of subjective natural language into objective logical symbolism and of a universal language so that the world, starting with scientists, finally spoke the same language.

Bordiga would never have thought that one could "create" an artificial language that was then normally used. Language follows material determinations and its use can only be guided in a small part; but the scientific language can and must be rigorous. Peano's method of logical notation allowed him to unmask the apparently powerful constructions of famous colleagues simply by transcribing their discoveries into logical symbols. By formalization Bordiga means precisely a set of abstract notations that are not indistinguishable and subjective as in "natural" language, that is, as he will say in '29 in Ponza,

"of such power to work and walk on their behalf, in a sense outside of consciousness and intelligence and as true machines to know".¹⁴

It is a problem of epistemology now recognized by the most serious bourgeois scientists themselves, those who, although far away from Marxism, have applied its method to modern results, which is interesting to us.

"The treatment of entities investigated with numerical measures and mathematical relations between their quantitative measures leads to making notions, relations, and their possession and handling less individual, more impersonal, collectively valid. The pure qualitative appreciation contained in judgments and inquiries communicated in words of common language, keeps the personal footprint as the words and their relations assume different values from person to person according to the previous material, emotional and cognitive tendencies, and predispositions. All judgments, all moral, aesthetic, philosophical, and political principles communicated and disseminated in speech and writing are therefore personal and subjective. The systems of numbers and the relations of mathematical symbols (...) tend to establish results valid for all researchers, or at

¹⁴ *Elements of Marxist Economics* (1929), ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1971.

least transferable to wider fields without being easily distorted by particular interpretations".¹⁵

The same concepts are explicitly contained in notes of those years, which should serve the same purpose: language is a machine for knowing and even changing the world, and the signs that represent it are conventions that serve to eliminate differences and therefore also subjective manipulations. Here's the difference between Peano and Hilbert, Frege, Russel, according to the historians of science: Peano worked for years on his Formulary transforming it into a laboratory that drew from all over the world ideas to fix them in a common language, to eliminate the subjective manipulations, precisely. The symbolic apparatus was used by Peano to compress concepts and eliminate chatter, as well as for mathematical use. Russel wanted to subordinate logic to arithmetic and failed the task. Bordiga notes on the use of logic:

"We do not deny the existence of logic as a science and instrumental technique of thought forms; In fact, it is well known that in the Marxist conception to its use is accompanied by that of dialectics, or science of relations, of which we will have to talk. But what needs to be clarified is that logic is constructed and justified by its application and correspondence to reality and not coded a priori in our head and only then applied to things."¹⁶

Purely the application of the symbolism that transforms our concepts into "universal" notations is not enough, because the "universe" is quite random if one is to take care of himself:

"Now if with the language mechanism you build science, as well as with experimental data, and you expect from the science itself the perfection of that mechanism, you are in a vicious circle because science will never acquire a value independent of the mechanism itself: Either this has its inner perfection on which science is based, and we are at the aprioristic thesis, or its language-thought instrument is imperfect in its nature, and at least in part, the operations of science and its reforms of the way of speaking and thinking will always be imperfed".¹⁷

But as revolutionaries we can not stop at the vicious circle and Bordiga shows, with engineering examples of mechanics (contradiction between the measurement and the meter), how one can overcome the problem by leaving the system to be observed (*misurare*).

¹⁵ To give an idea of the difficulty of commonly accepting the scientific procedure of transforming qualitative data into quantitative data, here is a beautiful exclamation from a university professor, researcher in the field of non-linear dynamics: '*...Observe that we can make quantitative predictions, numerical, starting from a purely qualitative model. It's a real miracle!*' And this after having demonstrated with mathematics that 'chaotic' phenomena are perfectly deterministic, contrary to what several Nobel scientists still believe (Ian Stewart, *Does God play dice?*)

¹⁶ *Philosophical Notes* (written on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Anti-Dühring*, 1928), in *Critique of Philosophy*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

If the symbols reflect our imperfections, they must be corrected so that our questions about the mysterious things of the world can be eliminated;

"To correct and rectify the mechanism of language means to modify appropriately the value of the terms representing real things, facts and [the value] of the logico-synthetic relationships susceptible to ever greater adaptation to their purpose".¹⁸

Galileo ended up burning on the rocks for having anticipated a concept similar to that of Peano and Bordiga in the Dialogue on the Maximum Systems: we cannot know the whole thing, which is too great for our understanding; But we can know the part, if we investigate it with the right method. Then we know her as God knows her. The difference is that god has infinite knowledge, while we know by degrees; However, the quality of our knowledge, if obtained through non-subjective procedures, i.e. mathematical, is equal to his.

Cattaneo, mentioned by us as part of the environment in which the national bourgeoisie and the international anti-bourgeoisie are formed, took Galileo and supported a dynamic theory of encirclement as the science of the conflict between social forces within nations and between nations: Since the objective limit of science is experimentation, history and science came to coincide. It is not Marxism, but it helped to prepare its advent in Italy, and Labriola was a good disseminator of it, as Pisacane was an anticipator, since "he talked about the struggle of the working class before reading Marx".¹⁹

At this school, the only Western Communist revolutionary was trained who dared tear Stalin's mouth and say to him: Marxism is not your thing, and it's going to be a catastrophe. He said it not for political controversy, he said it for scientific certainty. The translator secretary did not dare to translate and Stalin had to urge her. It was still about a decade before the trials and shootings, but language and behavior were rapidly adapting to the new Russian reality. If the logical patterns and the mathematical principles do not have a validity a priori, but "in reality, the susceptibility to adjustment of thought is absolutely unlimited"

In the sense that the world raises problems and man adapts his cognitive tools to their solution, the emergence of the revolution had to provoke a new language, new instruments of counter-revolutionary conservation. Hence the need for a battle for the reaffirmation of principles, the only great work possible after that. That is what the invariance of doctrine claims: Once the theoretical tool is given, then no doubt or change of method is allowed until a new revolutionary question is put on the carpet by the maturity of the process. The

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Filo: 'The socialists and the South' (1949)

retreat of the revolution entails the Marxist "nail hammering" until the moment of action, of attack, comes back.

As you can see, the continuity in affirming the need for a scientific method for the certainty of becoming is a revolutionary invariant. Every era has its science, but every science is an investigation into the future, science is calculated prediction. Moses' Promised Land is also a calculated prediction. His science of calculation is a living and real people that moves according to its history, and the era has a dogma as a scientific certainty: Yahweh said so. Behind the god there are thousands of years of experience, myth is a condensation of history. The "fool" laughs at it, and the scientist learns to interpret it.

Bordiga makes fun of those who call him dogmatic. To mock dogma, he says, one must first reach the level of dogma. And in a general meeting, he will provocatively contrast the Bible with a supposed Soviet scientist.

In 1955 he took up the theme again in an article written on the death of Albert Einstein. In the eyes of the decadent bourgeoisie, the "dogmatic" certainties of its revolutionary ancestors seem outdated. For these, the certainty of their material victory was placed in scientific theories and they believed that the universe was perfectly calculable at any time and place, given a starting point, if only human limitations did not prevent access to the necessary tools. Classical science had reached a limit, it was necessary to overcome it by incorporating it, not denying it as the theorists of indeterminism did and continue to do.

The scientists of the decadent bourgeoisie, says Bordiga, propose "in updated forms all the ancient doubts on the relationships between object and subject, reality and experience, nature and human knowledge"; Einstein attempted to stick to the historical path without coming to terms with the new subjectivism and would never have said if he had also been a revolutionary in the social field:

*"it is only very probable that the bourgeoisie and its ideology will go to hell"*²⁰

What biographers alternately mistake in Bordiga for theoretical purity, moral rectitude, dogmatism, obstinate search for orthodoxy, etc. is nothing more in reality, than Marxist scientific rigour.

²⁰ Filo: *Relativity and determinism* (1955)

2. Theory and Practice

2.1. Culture, Culturalism, and Revolutionary "Environment"²¹

The Youth Federation of the PSI represented, in 1911-12, the lively and vibrant part of the party. Its national newspaper, *L'Avanguardia*, was distributed in fifteen thousand copies, a huge number for the time. Other local periodicals accompanied it. This had considerable potential for party propaganda, so it was natural that the party would try to influence its direction.

The party saw the Youth Federation more as a school for future militants, trade unionists, deputies, officials, than as a revolutionary instrument integral to the organization.

Bordiga passionately rails against this "scholastic" conception. In controversy with Angelo Tasca, the greatest supporter of the "cultural" function of the FIGS, he states that the success of the revolution does not depend on "culture" but on the social environment, on revolutionary faith, and socialist "sentiment".

Tasca expresses well the culturalist concept that was typical of the entire party and which will become a cornerstone of the future Gramscian Ordiovism: the influence of the party on society is seen as an "evangelization" (he uses this term, albeit in quotation marks), and culture must be the instrument that enables the proletariat to produce in a non-alienated way and to "manage" production itself, undermining the function of the capitalist, to the point of making it superfluous with the revolution.

Bordiga denounces the abyss that separates this voluntarist and gradualist position from the dialectic of a non-mechanistic determinism and anticipates in the articles of this period the positions he will support both against the International and in the theoretical reconstruction of the post-World War II period.

The fundamental question to understand in the context of the anti-culturalist battle is well summarized by a classic and lapidary Bordigist phrase:

*"Revolutions are not made, they are directed"*²².

²¹ Minimum bibliography: *Cultural preparation or revolutionary preparation?* , in 'L'Avanguardia', 20 Oct. 1912; *Our mission* , in 'L'Avanguardia', 2 February. 1913; *The problem of culture* , in 'Avanti!', 5 April. 1913; *A programme: the environment* , in 'L'Avanguardia', 1 June 1913; *For socialist culture* , in 'L'Avanguardia', 13 July. 1913; *Intellectuals and Marxism* , in 'Battaglia Comunista', 11 May. 1949.

²² The complete sentence is found in Party and class action, in Rassegna Comunista of 31 May 1921, and is: 'Neither parties nor revolutions are created. Parties and revolutions are directed in the unification of useful international revolutionary experiences with the aim of ensuring the best victory coefficients for the proletariat.'

The revolution, like the extension of the party's influence, does not depend on the will of men, but on the material convergence of many factors. Culture is necessary, but it cannot be brought to the party sections and among the masses with missionary-type work. Culture is an individual fact that becomes general when historical necessity dictates it. You don't become revolutionary leaders just because you know how to read and write, because you know philosophy, history, physics, mathematics... just make a list of school subjects from primary school to university, to instinctively feel that the revolution has nothing to do with the catalogue of human knowledge. Bordiga mocks leaders who claim to teach young people while, through their daily political actions, they demonstrate that they understand nothing of Marxism. The list of *knowledge* highlights all the ridiculousness of the culturalist position, but it also sets things right regarding the correct way forward. *Revolutionary knowledge* consists in knowing where to go as the revolution matures. Amid the counter-revolution, the Bordighian image to define the lack of theoretical orientation will be that of "*crazy compasses*".²³

Revolutionary "culture" is not the starting point but the result of the finalized action of the masses and the party. Great revolutions did not erupt because they were wanted by brilliant leaders, but they erupted due to a combination of objective factors and *then*, in the explosion, they elevated political and military leaders to their head or created new and unknown ones.

Paradoxically, the anti-activist, anti-Bernstein Bordiga claims *the movement's* educational task and leaves the *goal* to a determinism that might seem completely abstract to the movement's followers. "*No, by God, the path of propaganda is not theory but feeling, as this is the spontaneous reflection of material needs in the nervous system of men*", she says with a reevaluation of the class instinct. The goal will be achieved if the party does not betray the real movement.

The interested biographers who seek a contradiction between Bordiga as a youth leader and the alleged "wait-and-see" one make a huge mistake in demonstrating that he would be an excellent theoretical analyzer but a terrible implementer of revolutionary politics.

The real question is not the relationship between culture and action but between theory and practice, and is resolved first of all by placing historical and dialectical materialism in the right terms. It is men who make history, but not how they think they are making it; it is not consciousness that establishes their being, but on the contrary their being that produces their consciousness; these well-known Marxist formulas simply mean that thought and consciousness come after facts. Revolutionary culture (or thought, or consciousness) is the *product* and not the factor of the revolution. Thus the organization, the party. Only when

²³ Filo: Crazy Compasses

the revolutionary process is mature and overwhelms the resistance, due to the dominant ideology, conscience and thought will assert themselves. But here too it is a historical phenomenon and not an individual one. Consciousness and will do not belong to individual brains but to the social brain. In the proletarian revolution, the social brain is represented by the party. And by party, we mean something very, very different from what was meant in the Second and Third International, not to mention today, where the word is so discredited that it arouses reactions of rejection in most people.

2.2. Against Politicianism and Southernism²⁴

In 1910 Bordiga rejected the pressure placed on him by the secular and liberal Masonic bourgeoisie and joined the Socialist Party. Except that within it, we find Freemasonry.

Although one of the first sections of the International had arisen in Naples in 1870, and the Neapolitan proletariat was one of the vanguard protagonists of the class struggle in Italy, socialism in that city was among the most compromised with reformist and bourgeois politics. The right-wing current openly supported Giolitti's liberalism to the point of almost becoming its accomplice in colonial politics. The left current was limited to talkative and extremist trade unionism, but it was also well rooted in the bourgeois status quo. Reformists and trade unionists were members of Freemasonry which represented a sort of union between the currents which, in the end, were completely in agreement on a brazen electoralism.

As we have seen, a true Marxist current emerged in the years 1911-12. Coexistence with a party so disastrous from a class point of view is problematic and for almost ten years a dialogue between the deaf continues. But such a slow maturation allows the Left to perfect its critical weapons and integrate with the movement which, through October 1917, the foundation of the Third International and the culmination reached by its Second Congress, attempted to become the single world party of the revolution.

The polemic against politicianism and southernist conceptions will provide Bordiga with the theoretical experience for subsequent battles on issues which, compared to these degenerations of the workers' movement, represented "invariants" already addressed by Lenin. His main target is the concept that justifies the political laxity of the party especially in the South by resorting to apparently materialistic explanations. The syllogisms fought are the following:

²⁴ Minimal bibliography: Southern socialism and moral questions, in 'Avanti!', 1 Nov. 1912; The Carlo Marx circle for southern socialism and against the degenerations of the Neapolitan Socialist Union, pamphlet, Apr. 1914; Neapolitan socialism and its morbid degenerations, 'Il Soviet', 22 May. 1921; The southern question (collection of writings 1912-1954), ed. Quad. Int. cit., December 1992.

since the South is backward, then an adequate policy must be implemented in the South; since the backwardness of the South is reflected in a corrupt and clientelistic, as well as bigoted, bourgeoisie, then we must adopt a moralizing and anti-clerical policy; since we understand very well that this policy is a little different from that which the party carries out in the North, then we must have greater *autonomy* in our actions, especially with regards to electoral alliances; since the southern working class is objectively more backward than the northern one, then the southern socialist trade unionists will take this into account, considering the trade union struggle for immediate improvements as an end and not as a means for revolutionary action.

These are not simply questions of the internal politics of a party that has some difficulties in the southern provinces. Bordiga demonstrates that the blatant tendency towards compromise of southern socialism is nothing but the amplified reflection of a *natural* attitude of social democracy. Purified from local and personal references, the battle is the same that had to be waged first against the entire socialist party, then against the new Bolshevik communist party incapable of overcoming the obstacles of the counter-revolution in the West, and finally against the degeneration of the International which applies the Muscovite to world issues, destroying any real possibility of establishing a true single world communist movement.

The ways of opportunism, like those of the Lord, are infinite. The southern backwardness of Italy at the beginning of the century is a fact to be examined Marxistically. What are the true relations of production and exchange? What is the nature of southern poverty? These are the points to be clarified, it is not enough to photograph the poverty, backwardness and corruption of the bourgeoisie to automatically deduce a comfortable policy free from Marxist obligations.

Bordiga demonstrates that southern backwardness has nothing feudal about it and that the relations between city and countryside are not at all backward from the point of view of the maturity of capitalism. In the Italian South, contrary to what the opportunists claim, there is less feudalism than in the North, and in Italy less than in other European countries. Southern agriculture has been freed from feudal characteristics at least since the time of Frederick II of Swabia, the backwardness is due to the shift of mercantile currents in the late Middle Ages and, subsequently, precisely to the impact with the industrial capitalism of the North. The income from the so-called large estate is surplus value that crystallizes in that form, but subsequently flows back as credit or as a state subsidy to northern industry. Therefore the phenomenon of persistent southern backwardness is a phenomenon of modern capitalism, which must be fought with a more fierce defense of the class characteristics of the party. Nothing but autonomy for demanding special situations.

Hence: no to the tactics of spurious alliances, to blocs with freemasons and bourgeois anticlericals, to moralizing campaigns.

It is not Marxist, explains Bordiga, to fight bourgeois corruption by demanding bourgeois administrative morality, which does not exist, in its place. On the other hand, we cannot replace it with a moral socialist administration, because the socialist task is the revolution, not the administration of capitalist affairs.

2.3. Anti-Parliamentarism²⁵

The Socialist Party oscillated between separation from the reformists and unity with them at all costs. At the Bologna Congress of 1919, unity was maintained by avoiding political problems, while the parliamentary group now acted in full autonomy from the party, offering a clear demonstration that the anti-electionist and anti-parliamentary theses have a concrete basis. Parliament is an instrument of domination of the bourgeoisie and participation in its daily life, despite good intentions, turns into the worst form of corruption, surrender, and compromise even for authentic revolutionaries.

Abstentionism is not so much an indispensable means for revolutionary preparation as a catalyst for the *selection* of true revolutionaries. For Bordiga, abstentionism is linked to two factors: separation from the reformists and the existence of a revolutionary process that began in Russia. Abstentionism as an end in itself has no meaning.

If the task of the socialists, i.e. the revolutionaries, is not to administer bourgeois affairs, the distinction must be clear: one only goes to parliament "to destroy it from within" and not to make it work better than the bourgeois.

But parliament in the West, unlike in Russia, where Lenin could apply the phrase just mentioned, does not lend itself to being used as a "tribune" for denouncing the troubles caused by capitalism. The Western parliament is an old trap that grinds down any parliamentarian with tribunal ambitions, even the most steadfast in the face of opportunism. Parliament is the sewer in which only chatter flows and in which every action useful to the proletarian cause gets bogged down and is rendered sterile before it can even manifest itself. A careful analysis of the affairs of the Italian parliament, born already old from the national revolution, demonstrates that *first* the affairs of the industrial and financial oligarchies are decided, executive majorities are established, and *then* they are given to the discussion of now impotent minorities.

²⁵ A summary on the issue of abstentionism is contained in *O revolutionary preparation or electoral preparation*, where the positions of the Left are placed side by side with those of Lenin, Trotzky, Zinoviev, Bukharin. Ed. Quad. Int. cit., November 1991.

Naturally, it couldn't be a question of principle: revolutionaries also act in hell, if necessary. In fact, when the International ordered the newly formed Communist Party to participate in the 1921 elections, it participated by deploying all its forces, even expelling the sections that refused to comply with the directives.

What is not admissible is the tactical implication of parliamentary politics which envelops all the activity of the workers' parties until it extends into the field of direct class action. The politics of the united front was born to involve the non-communist proletarians in the clash with the bourgeoisie and ended up involving the communist parties in social democratic politics.

In 1921 the Italian delegation to the Third Congress of the IC, speaker Terracini, defended the critical position of the Left towards the tactics of the united front, but it was not understood by the majority of the delegates. The rapporteur does not carry out the task entrusted to him well, but nothing justifies the interpretation given to his report other than the fundamentally democratic-parliamentary prejudice. The comparison with anarchic or advising extremism is completely arbitrary and Lenin himself is its spokesperson. Bordiga perceives the damage. Terracini, deserved a scolding because he expressed himself with non-communist language and concepts, but unfortunately, Lenin's criticisms²⁶ and his authority would later be used against the Italian Left completely inappropriately. Lenin agreed on separation from the reformists but was not aware of the fact that in the West the united front tactic would have led to an unnatural *political* alliance with them and not just to common action. Later, the insistence on this tactic even led to the proposal of a merger between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party from which it had just separated. The Aventine retreat in defense of parliament against fascism is nothing other than the closing of the vicious circle of parliamentary action that was not at all intended in a destructive sense, à la Lenin.

In the International, opportunistic positions on tactics were being clarified starting from political alliances and this manifested itself on the level of parliamentary action before in direct struggle. The Bolshevik comrades did not realize this, Bordiga did.

Despite the disaster that could have loomed, or precisely because of it, he did not a priori lead a fight against those who would later be anti-communist adversaries. The Second Congress of the PCd'I represented a turning point in relations with the International with the presentation of the Theses on Tactics in which there is no question of parliamentarianism or not, but the deadly

²⁶ The trouble is that Terracini also spoke on behalf of the German and Austrian parties. The fact of not having differentiated well on the question of the united front facilitated the confusion that was created between the Italian Left and the other currents. Lenin recognized that he had been wrong and that he had to ally himself with the 'right' in reaction to leftisms that he could not stomach: 'I must admit a mistake I made at the Third Congress...' in Notes of a publicist, March 1922, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1966, Op. compl. vol. 33 pages. 187.

intertwining between bourgeois politics and wrong proletarian tactic. The IC delegates present at the Congress, now bearers of a pre-established direction, despite almost all the congressional votes going to the *Rome Theses*, take a position against them.

At a subsequent conference, held in Berlin (April), Bordiga strengthened his belief that not only an incorrect tactical attitude was developing within the International, but also a serious theoretical misunderstanding of the problems of revolution in the West. As in the case of the *Theses of Rome*, he does not make his concerns entirely explicit, but the topics addressed in the articles written in that period are almost all intended to straighten out the shaky theses of others. On the question of the united front, for example, there are reaffirmations of principle contrary to the approach that was current in the communist movement, even if upon his return from Berlin Bordiga said that he was faced with different evaluations within the context of a common path.

At the IV Congress of the IC he proposed the same themes again in the presentation of the Theses on the Tactics of the International. Here too the question of anti-parliamentarism is no longer addressed *as such* but is echoed in the question of the united front and of the new tactical monstrosity resulting from the theoretical insufficiency of the movement: the workers' government. Bordiga's passionate interventions fail to undermine the fascination of the various frontist positions. It is now a "desperate" defense entrusted above all to the Theses, which will not find confirmation either in the International or in other parties. The discussion will be postponed to the V Congress. The same Theses represented as they are by the Left will be... archived forever.

Communist anti-parliamentarism, being also linked to general questions of tactics, therefore has a completely different basis from anarchism. In 1924 Bordiga wrote a very clear article on the occasion of the elections, which gave the list led by the fascist party 65% of the vote: abstentionism was a proposal that the Left made to the International and not a moralistic anarchist attitude; the application of the proposal only made sense in the context of a single direction of the entire International, that's why it was abandoned; the abstentionist nostalgia of today, 1924, is the result of states of mind that have nothing to do with communism and our anti-electoralist conviction; those who say today 'let us not go to elections' say it because they know that elections are not held in full 'freedom' because of fascism; this kind of abstentionism derives precisely from the electionist conviction that we must compete 'sportingly' for a numerical result favourable to us.

"I am not saying, mind you, that we must accept the elections as a challenge to be taken up on the terrain of violence: the opportunity to accept provocations of this nature is decided with very different factors of political strategy, which today certainly exclude it. But, since we cannot talk about the transformation of the electoral campaign into class war, we must at least strictly

guard against political attitudes that cause the masses to lose the sense of the necessity of the revolutionary solution to come"²⁷

These words were written in February 1924. In April the fascist "listone" won the elections by a landslide. In June, after the assassination of Matteotti, the opposition abandons parliament demanding "the restoration of the authority of the law" and the Communist Party joins the democratic whining. Only later did Bordiga manage to convince Gramsci to stop those antics. In November, Repossi, a member of the Left, claims class violence against the fascist dictatorship in parliament, recalling that *"we do not live waiting for a bourgeois compromise for which the bourgeoisie today invokes the intervention of the king, for which social democracy reformist and maximalist gives rise to the class struggle... The center of our action is outside this room, among the working masses"*²⁸

2.4. Anti-Militarism²⁹

Among Bordiga's very first political interventions are the actions against what was then called 'the Tripoline adventure', i.e. the war in Libya. The war did not proceed according to the forecasts of the generals who failed to occupy Tripoli and therefore its echoes were amplified in Italian society.

Suppose the war projects the social contradictions of capitalism outwardly by trying to involve the 'people' to achieve social unification. In that case, the working class shows that it is not sensitive to such diversions, that it is not part of the so-called public opinion instigated by the regime's newspapers. It does not read, it does not vote, it does not 'participate' in political life, but it is opposed by instinct to the massacres on African soil. Bordiga chooses two significant texts to document the first volume of the History of the Left. The texts quoted are very brief, but they are important because they contain 'the delivery of the general strike, which however the Party and the workers' organizations did not proclaim, or rather allowed to fail while all over Emilia and Romagna it had erupted with demonstrations and bloody street clashes'.³⁰

The issue of the Libyan war is also essential to the struggle within Neapolitan socialism, from which the Left would be born. 'The equivocal

²⁷ Nostalgie astensioniste, in O preparazione ecc. cit.

²⁸ *Declaration by Repossi to the Chamber on behalf of the PCd'I*, in *preparation etc.* cit. In addition to calling into question the king, who naturally did nothing, the madness of the democrats even went as far as calling for an intervention by the army to establish "a superior administration alien to the interests of any party".

²⁹ Antimilitarism is a partial aspect of the military question addressed by Bordiga. For other aspects, see also the collection of texts 1949-52 *Or revolution or war*, ed. Quad. Int. cit., November 1992.

³⁰ *History of the Communist Left*, ed. The Communist Program 1964, vol. I bis, page. article 27. *The Tripoli* and the *Odg* cited appeared in *La Lotta di Classe* n. 87 of 23 September 1911. Precisely due to the combative situation in Emilia Romagna, Bordiga was sent by the party for a series of anti-war conferences in 1914.

socialism of the Neapolitan section did not take an anti-war position at all,' says Bordiga.³¹ In his polemic with the trade unionists he shows that the anti-Tripoline campaign 'unfortunately served to conceal the true wickedness of Neapolitan popularism. The political situation created by the war was not felt by the trade unionists in Naples who continued to support the most ardent supporters of the war itself in the blockade'. The question of peace or war is posed by Bordiga in the same terms as Lenin. For democrats, the subject of the question is the state. Should it or should it not participate in the war? The question, says Bordiga, presupposes that we are part of it, as those who participate in its parliamentary life believe. But communists are for the overthrow of the bourgeois state, it is the enemy to be fought. Under no circumstances can we ally ourselves in a political bloc to avert war on 'our' state, to 'demand' neutrality, to have a peace that would be a bourgeois peace.

On the eve of the First World War, as European social democracy plunged into catastrophe, the Italian Left differentiated itself from the Socialist Party of which it was still a member by declaring itself against neutrality and against any power agreement with the bourgeois parties that wanted it (Giolitti and part of the Catholics). They were for peace and legality, they would have waged war against the proletariat if the latter had tried to solve the problem of intervention with their own class methods. Giolitti actually formed a bourgeois government after the war and sent the army to surround factories occupied by workers.

When an interventionist position was formed in the party in favour of France, no particular argument arose, it was isolated and eventually expelled. This is Mussolini's position. He writes in a letter³² that he is assailed by the feelings and correspondence of those who ask him not to let France's throat be torn out, but that he will not give in. On 18 October 1914 he went back on his word in an article in the party newspaper and went on to found, with French money brought by Cachin³³ the interventionist newspaper 'Il popolo d'Italia'.

No section in the party followed him, not the slightest fraction formed. Bordiga recalls that 'there were comrades and companions who offered to go and shoot him'³⁴.

In 1915, Italy entered the war. Faced with a fait accompli, pressure on the Socialist Party multiplied. While internally the term neutralists is questioned following the German advance as far as the gates of Paris (France had just moved the government to Bordeaux) and the East, Bordiga reiterates that revolutionaries are neither neutralists nor pacifists, but class-war

³¹ *To the socialists of Italy*, pamphlet edited by the Circolo Carlo Marx, Naples, April 1914, page 7.

³² Probably in Bordiga; cited by the same in *History of the Left* vol. I cit.

³³ Marcel Cachin, a socialist until 1919, was then one of the founders of the French Communist Party at the split in Tours in 1920. A living example of what Bordiga would not have wanted in the International, he went to Italy at the end of 1914 to convince the PSI to abandon neutralism.

³⁴ *History of the left* Vol 1.

interventionists. 'We are of those socialists who in their convinced internationalism leave no place for the superstition of the fatherland.... [*in the face of the appeal for national harmony we remain*] tenacious advocates of class discord"³⁵

The analysis conducted with the detached method, as a revolutionary who looks at bourgeois events as a historical series to be truncated, leads Bordiga to consider the belligerent states as a single enemy bloc. The Russian defeats prove that one was talking in circles about Teutonic barbarism advancing against civilisation; now civilisation is being defended by even more barbaric hordes, if this imbecilic expression is permissible. But 'modern German military technique was right on the brute force of numbers, the scientific strategy of the German marshals paralyzed the overwhelming impact of the Cossack cavalries' because the democratisation induced by the technique and organisation of modern capitalism had nothing to do with the appearance of the type of government: 'It must be recognised that Germany's success was due in the main to the perfect egalitarian and democratic cohesion of the various classes achieved before and during the war, to the same factors, that is, thanks to which France resisted'.³⁶ This thesis, which finds a decisive 'invariant' between apparently different states in terms of social structure (democracy/totalitarianism), will form the basis of the post-World War II analysis and the analysis of the nature of 'fascism' that will be the structure of real government in Italy, Germany, the United States, Japan and, with differences due to origin, Stalinist Russia.

When the United States intervened, Bordiga did not applaud the event as a positive fact that led to the conclusion of the war, but as a negative fact that anticipated the possibility of new imperialist wars. Modern militarism is a product of capitalism and, as such, is completely different from the militarism of past eras. The present war is not a product of the clash between militarism and democracy, but between militarisms that all tend towards the developed modern capitalist form and are at the same time its product, regardless of the form of government; indeed, 'the most modern, industrial, bourgeois, democratic states make war better'.³⁷ This does not allow genuine Marxists to have any preference for one of the groups of states in the conflict.

America entered the war in 1917 and the February democratic revolution broke out in Russia. These major events do not rectify the starting point at all: the United States has calculated more coldly than anyone else the expediency of war, first with neutrality, now with intervention, their arrival is trivial militarism; the revolution in Russia does not bring this immense Asian country closer to the hypocritical Wilsonian theses, but distances it, having erupted with a strong

³⁵ *Stop in our place*, in 'Il Socialista' n. 35 of 22 May 1915. This short article was taken up by many party newspapers.

³⁶ *Ciò che diviene evidente*, in 'Avanti!', 17 settembre 1915.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

anti-war charge. It is absurd to read them and interpret them the other way around, that is, as if the American intervention was really Wilsonian in its desire for peace, as if the Russian democratic revolution were the prelude to a new military offensive more consistent with that of the Western democratic allies.

Instead of unleashing themselves in this puerile exercise, the socialists would do well to "eviscerate with the scalpel of Marxist criticism the very important phenomena that characterise the current history of the capitalist colossus across the Atlantic and the grandiose social relations in the new Russia, where the Third Estate will represent a very different part than in the France of '89".³⁸ American militarism will give the world 'the cold shoulder' for what remains of the century, and the October Revolution will end the war with an uprising of the Fourth Estate which, for the first time in history, will come to power.

2.5. Communism versus Fascism and Anti-Fascism³⁹

While all political camps believe that fascism represents a qualitative change in the form of power, Bordiga denies this and highlights the physical continuity of bourgeois rule with the new demands of the exercise of power itself⁴⁰. This adds another element of divergence within the party and with the International.⁴¹

Bordiga studies the nature of fascism over a very wide period, ranging from the first open, political and violent demonstrations in Italy in 1919-20 to 1970, the date of his last public speech a few weeks before his death.

His analysis of the fascist phenomenon became inseparable from that of all other phenomena of mature capitalism from at least 1922, at the time of his report to the 4th Congress of the Communist International.⁴² He first responds to Radek on the latter's interpretation of the relationship between the PCd'I and fascism. Radek (but it is the International's position) shows that he gives an entirely political, i.e. contingent, interpretation of fascism. In criticising the PCd'I's attitude, he reproaches it for wanting to remain a small, elitist party,

³⁸ *Nulla da rettificare*, in 'Avanti!' del 23 maggio 1917.

³⁹ A collection of 33 texts by Bordiga on the subject is *Comunismo e fascismo*, ed. Quad. Int. cit., November 1992, pages 348.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 31 October 1922.

⁴¹ To tell the truth, no one, except Bordiga, either within the party or at the International has ever carried out a serious economic and social examination of the fascist phenomenon. Gramsci's interpretation is the classic one to which the PCI was faithful as long as it existed: fascism would be the result between two forces, the one due to a weak and conservative capitalist bourgeoisie and the one due to the alliance between the reactionary bourgeoisie and the Italian pre-bourgeois classes.

⁴² Report of the PCd'I on fascism at the IV Congress of the IC. Twelfth session, 16 Nov. 1922, in *Communism and Fascism*, ed. Quad. Int. cit.

dedicated more to its organisation than to the great political questions of the moment.

Bordiga would reply on other occasions that the great political questions, the tactics, the strategy of the party are not detached from the firm grasp of revolutionary theory, and that tactical fluctuations for a party (but this was also true for the CI) are as deleterious as a defeat in the field.

Fascism, therefore, says Bordiga in 1922, is not a phenomenon due to the birth and action of a particular political movement: it has already been present in Italy since at least 1914-15, when part of the bourgeoisie decided to enter the war. The groups are heterogeneous, but they are guided by the interests of the great industrial bourgeoisie, which has in Salandra its political exponent and which, before calling for intervention alongside the Entente against Austria and Germany, had even recommended a war against it. However, there were also irredentist republican groups, revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists, and liberal radicals. In his next report, to the 5th Congress of the CI in July 1924, Bordiga reiterated that it was the extreme wing, the anarcho-syndicalist and extremist socialist renegade wing 'that provided post-war fascism with its general staff'.⁴³

The fascist phenomenon should not be analysed from its political components, even though these will shape speeches and documents in everyday action. The essential component of fascism is the industrial bourgeoisie with its state. The post-war demobilisation, the industrial reconversion, the danger of an internal revolution, posed the bourgeoisie with a 'gigantic problem. It could solve it neither technically nor militarily through an open struggle against the proletariat; it had to solve it politically'.⁴⁴

The bourgeoisie first made concessions to the proletariat through the liberal-reformist ministries of Nitti and Giolitti. At the same time it set up a second army, the Guardia Regia, which was neither a police nor a real army. And it continued to pay demobilised officers who went to train the fascist military apparatus.

But why was the bourgeoisie taking this path?

A first answer is that it clearly wanted and needed to avoid revolution. Fascism therefore takes as its first aspect that of the counter-revolutionary white guard. This is an immediate, important, but not essential aspect. Fascism does not have a specific programme, it does not have its own ideology but results from the combination of the ideologies of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes

⁴³ Report of the PCd'I on fascism at the V Congress of the IC. Twenty-third session, 2 July 1924, in *Communism and Fascism*, ed. Quad. Int. cit.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

representing armed labour. At the time (1922) it fits perfectly into the parliamentary game. It does not represent a 'right' of the bourgeoisie, but a union of all bourgeois demands. It does not ideologically want the violent domination of one class over the other, but copies from bourgeois democracy maximum collaboration between the classes. When the fascists formulated an organic programme they did not invent anything new, they simply put forward a mixture of social democratic and reformist demands, seasoned with language that was a little more demagogic than that of the democrats. Fascism also drew on the Russian revolutionary experience, copying what it needed in terms of organisation, discipline, centralisation, a single class party.

The essence of fascism, however, *is not* in these superstructural aspects, even if the bourgeoisie needs them because they represent the political justification of the counter-revolution. The answer that Bordiga gives to *why* the bourgeoisie was taking this path is that fascism is *the structure of every different form of bourgeois government in the era of imperialism*. Imperialism is the "supreme" phase, that is, the last. This phase corresponds to a way of governing economic and social facts determined by the maturity of economic conditions. It cannot be *just any way*, nor can it be a way appropriate to previous periods in the history of capitalism. The supreme phase of capitalism demands a supreme phase of the mode of government. The process is irreversible, therefore the new form of bourgeois domination cannot be renounced by the bourgeoisie.

This is not a Bordigian "invention". The in-depth analysis, although not yet explicit, of the necessity of fascism is found in Lenin and precisely in *Imperialism, the highest phase of capitalism*. For Lenin the adjective "highest" has the same meaning as "rotten" as he explains several times. The text ends with this observation: imperialism, that is, the decay of capitalism, is the supreme phase, that is, that of the socialization of production. This is *transitional capitalism*, that is, dying capitalism.

It is to try not to die that capitalism must give itself this extreme form of domination summarized in the word "fascism", which Bordiga uses as a convenient reference behind which, however, there is a materialist-dialectical reconstruction of the historical process that leads to the overcoming of capitalism. He is not afraid to state that fascism is not a return to history; which does not represent a greater defeat for the proletariat than democracy does; that indeed, the more modern and simplified class relations are, the better it is for the future revolution: "*For the movement that had followed the straight path [fascism] would have been, as it will be [recognized] one day, the best gift of history*".⁴⁵ Great scandal, naturally among the opportunists, but Bordiga is not upset: everything is already written for example in the *18th Brumaire* of Marx. When the bourgeois executive stands against parliament, it thereby isolates itself in the face of the revolution which will have no other obstacles to

⁴⁵ Filo: 1949 *Southernism and moralism*

overcome. But instead of shouting with Marx "*well dug, you old mole!*", instead of preparing for an armed response against the White Guard, the opportunist cowardly returns to the defense of democracy and parliament. While history places the simplification of the revolutionary path on a silver platter, the opportunist complicates it by returning to previous social ties. Fascism is no more reactionary *in itself* than any other updated form of bourgeois government: it becomes so because of the anti-fascist reaction which throws the proletariat into a deadly alliance with other social strata in defense of bourgeois democracy:

"The worst result, for the fate of the proletarian class, is the entry into the pompous anti-fascist collapse of the proletarian part which had finally taken the original and autonomous path, so that everyone, each in their own way, started to redo the development of the first Risorgimento. This is a counter-revolutionary one, which weighs on a century, if Mussolini's had a weight on it for twenty years, the second one weighed in a counter-revolutionary sense because that is how the handlers of opportunist politics interpreted it."⁴⁶

Fascism has used violence and murder no more and no less than previous or subsequent regimes did, in Italy and elsewhere. But it would be foolish moralism to stop at quantitative considerations on manifest or potential violence when comparing *forms* of government. Instead, it is dialectical materialism to demonstrate that violence against humanity is not due to the phenomenal form of capitalism *but to capitalism itself*.

At the V Congress of the IC, Bordiga already offers a complete explanation of fascism in his very long report. Ideologically, as we have seen, fascism brings nothing new, it limits itself to copying what it needs from what already exists, on the right and above all on the left. What is truly new is a new organization of the State, a single centralized bourgeois party, a powerful military and social organization that involves the proletariat itself.

In 1924 Bordiga still sees a deadly contradiction between the organizational and centralizing need of the bourgeois state and the ultra-liberal ideology professed by the fascists. It is a contradiction between fascism and those who personify it. If things are like this, says Bordiga, they cannot last, "*fascism is condemned to failure by virtue of the economic anarchy of capitalism, despite the fact that it has firmly taken the reins of government*".⁴⁷

In 1924 the fascists were actually in crisis as they were unable to exploit the electoral victory to revive the economy and completely restructure the state. Matteotti's assassination provokes a generalized workers' rebellion which seems to prefigure the possibility of a class recovery. Bordiga's prediction about fascism condemned to failure refers to the fascist apparatus and not to its mode of government, and is due to the fact that he experiences events directly and

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Report of the PCd'I on fascism at the V Congress of the IC. Twenty-third session, 2 July 1924, in *Communism and Fascism*, ed. Quad. Int. cit.

cannot know that fascism will soon complete its masterpiece: it will rationalize despotic intervention in the economy, regulating capitalist anarchy on the one hand and the natural tendency towards monopoly on the other. The fundamental contradiction of productive and distributive anarchy is cushioned, but the tendency to excessive monopolistic concentration, a factor of expropriation and limitation of the "free market", is also fought. The state will buy companies suffering due to competition, close them or renovate them depending on their conditions, then return them to the market. Credit will be regulated, extensive public works will be planned.

Demonstrating the fact that vulgar economics only seeks to give an explanation to economic phenomena a posteriori, Keynes rationalized all this in a formal theoretical system only twelve years later, that is, even later than the first applications of German fascism. After all, a material phenomenon, a vital need of capitalism, could not remain an exception:

"We are of the opinion that fascism tends to spread in a certain way even outside Italy... In general we can expect a copy of Italian fascism abroad which will intersect with forms of manifestation of the democratic and pacifist wave"⁴⁸, says Bordiga in 1924.

Fascism and democratic and pacifist wave? The European delegates, sitting at the congress, educated in democracy and pacifism, must have thought: this is crazy. The Russian delegates did not understand and fought the Left, paying dearly for their mistake. In Italy, social democracy attempted a peace pact with the fascists and, receiving blows from them in response, switched to verbal anti-fascism. In Germany, the social democrats Scheidemann and Noske had already opened the way for repression.⁴⁹ Later Stalin's firing squads exterminated, after a fair and democratic process, the Bolshevik old guard. The sequence continues with the anti-fascist armies in Spain who killed more anarchists than Francoists, with the Hitler-Stalin pact and the partisan crusade alongside Anglo-Saxon imperialism.

Fascist political and economic centralization was nothing new in Italy. The historical right that governed Italy after national unification was the last example of a coherent liberal bourgeois government. But it was already a centralizer and unifier of particularistic impulses. It disappeared once and for all in 1876, when it was won by the demagogic and wordy bourgeois left, incapable of reforming its state. Fascism was not a return to pre-unification and pre-bourgeois situations, it was instead a modern phenomenon capable of reform; he was in reality the dialectical implementer of the old demands of socialist reformism.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Come matura il 'noskismo'*, in 'Il Comunista' del 14 luglio 1921, Ora in *Comunismo e fascismo*, ed. Quad. Int. ci

Not having understood this was a disaster for the world workers' movement, which fell under the influence of a social product worse than fascism itself: crybaby, democrat-like anti-fascism.

"When the first example of the type of bourgeois totalitarian government occurred in Italy with fascism, the fundamental false strategic approach of giving the proletariat the task of entrusting the struggle for freedom and constitutional guarantees within an anti-fascist coalition manifested the total misdirection of the international communist movement away from the right revolutionary strategy. Confusing Mussolini and Hitler, reformers of the capitalist regime in the most modern sense, with Kornilov or with the forces of the restoration and the Holy Alliance of 1815, was the greatest and most disastrous error of evaluation and marked the total abandonment of the revolutionary method".⁵⁰

Anti-fascism led proletarian forces to massacre each other, first in Spain and then in the countries occupied by the Axis forces, not in favor of the revolution, but in favor of two opposing bourgeois state alignments that maintained regular and irregular troops on the expense account of their governments. The *partisan* was therefore not in reality a revolutionary fighter as he himself sometimes believed in good faith to be, but a new kind of soldier of fortune, a mercenary who, instead of receiving money for his services, received the illusion of fighting for an ideal.

The historical sequence of social progress, notes Bordiga, is not: fascism-democracy-socialism, where fascism represents a retrograde moment compared to democracy. In the era of imperialism, fascism comes after democracy and the *progressive* series is therefore democracy-fascism-proletarian dictatorship-socialism. To the democratic and hypocritical anti-fascist he ironically says: if you want to be progressive within capitalism, have the courage to be a fascist, otherwise instead of proletarians ready for revolution you will produce *"laughers of American swindlers, when in the race for effective fascism under the label of freedom, the Anglo-Saxons will have beaten the Russians, who lack control of the dollar more than nuclear energy, so they will perhaps be bought before being defeated"*⁵¹

2.6. The Conception of the Party

In 1920, at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin presented the 20 conditions of membership, which later became 21 following the request for greater rigor presented by the "Italian" Left. From this particular document the difficulties of considering the Communist International as a single party are evident. The presence of such a detailed list of rules in itself means

⁵⁰ *Tracciato d'impostazione*, in *Prometeo* n. 1, luglio 1946, ora nel testo dallo stesso titolo ed. Quad. Int. cit. marzo 1992.

⁵¹ *Tendencies and socialism*, in *Prometeo* n. 5, January 1947,

that there is no homogeneity between the national parties that aspire to be part of the world party that they would like to establish.

In the theses on the party presented by Zinoviev, the question of the party is set out in a consistently Marxist way, but still refers to the individual *national communist parties, even if they must be only one per country, and to the internal democratic functioning, based on elective*, therefore on democratic centralism. Considering how it had been constituted, the new International could not give more. On the other hand, a higher point had never been reached in the international workers' movement than the Second Congress of 1920 and was not reached thereafter. All this also represented a serious impediment to the further development of the international workers' movement itself, especially in the West.

In Bordiga's youthful writings we find an already fiercely anti-formalist conception of the party. He cannot stand the old notables, the electoral and clientelistic routine, the practice of politics for politics' sake. He uses his influence in the Youth Federation in an attempt to break with this practice and would like to isolate young people from the mephitic environment of the party. The anti-culturalist controversy is also a positive controversy for a party of a very different nature from that of the old PSI.

"This is what we see as a whole program of the youth movement. To remove the formation of character from the exclusive influence of the present society, to live all together, us young workers or not, breathing a different and better air, to burn the bridges that unite with non-socialist milieus, sever the ties through which the poison of selfishness and competition infiltrates into one's blood; sabotage , in a word, this infamous society, creating revolutionary oases destined to one day invade it all, digging mines destined to upset its foundations".⁵²

This still immature conception of the human community that must be tempered for the revolution is a preview of the more mature conclusions on organic centralism. The party is not simply an organizational tool, but much more. The revolutionary party is different from the bourgeois parties *"it is not a workers' party among others"*, as Marx had already said, but the organ of the revolutionary class.

Disgust for traditional parties must not translate into the denial of the party. Very early Bordiga warns against the anarchist conception that centralized organization is an evil in itself. He warns above all against finding party surrogates in immediate bodies which by their nature cannot be the organ of revolutionary direction:

⁵² *Un programma: l'ambiente*, in 'L'Avanguardia', 1 giugno 1913

"After certain results of the syndicalist tactics every conscious revolutionary must recognize the necessity of the existence of a party, in a sense, it is true, very different from that in which the reformists understand it".⁵³

The backwardness of the conception of the party in the International led Bordiga to write two fundamental articles in the theoretical journal of the PCd'I in 1921.⁵⁴ Was it possible that what the Russian Revolution had done to the Bolshevik Party was not obvious to Marxists? Is it possible that we couldn't understand that Lenin represented the complete opposite of democratism, electionism, bureaucracy, personal careerism? Didn't we realize that the Bolshevik Party, beyond its language forged in the still democratic tasks of the Russian revolution, reflected an internal nature completely different from that of Western parties?

In the first of the two articles mentioned, Bordiga recalls the theses of the Second Congress presented by Zinoviev and uses them as a starting point. However, he goes much beyond their content. He writes that in a dynamic conception of relations between classes, the proletariat moves historically to overthrow the domination of the bourgeoisie; therefore he expresses his history, his experience, records victories and defeats, in a word he forges the theory of his revolution. The proletariat as a whole cannot be the custodian of this theory. On the other hand, only in historical dynamics is the proletariat a class, otherwise it is merely a social class alongside the others. But in the historical dynamic the proletariat is a class *for itself* only if it expresses a theoretical and practical guide, its party:

"The class presupposes the party because to be and to move in history, the class must have a critical doctrine of history and a purpose to be achieved in it".⁵⁵

The parties of the Second International failed in their revolutionary tasks not because the proletarian parties had failed, but precisely because they were organisms that had ceased to be parties.

In the second article, which is a single whole with the first and which is one of Bordiga's most beautiful and clearly "scientific" writings on the party, the dialectic between the organisation, the class and the historical movement is addressed.⁵⁶ The party fulfills its task as a factor of conscience, as it possesses the theoretical conception of the revolutionary process above and in common with all its members; it fulfills its task as a factor of will, as it disciplines, coordinates and centralizes its components, and those of the class, ensuring the possibility of victory.

⁵³ *Organization and party*, in 'L'Avanguardia', 20 July 1913

⁵⁴ *Party and class and Party and class action*, in *Rassegna Comunista*, 15 April and 31 May 1921

⁵⁵ *Party and class 1921*

⁵⁶ *Party and class action 1921*

The party does not live outside the material determinants faced by class and society. It is a factor of history, but first of all a product of history itself. Woe, however, if one deduces from this that with every change in situation the theoretical and organizational principles must be changed. In fact, we must not confuse the *situational* changes with *historical ones*.

It is clear that there are already criticisms, and quite explicit ones, of phenomena that were barely in embryo in the 1921 International. The offensive of the revolutionary party makes sense only when the economic and social situation *really* puts the masses on the offensive against bourgeois society. Otherwise we fall into the voluntarist attitude, with which we believe that the play of forces organized and well disciplined by an international management that organizes millions of workers is sufficient to move the general situation from stagnation to revolutionary movement.

"Neither parties nor revolutions are created. Parties and revolutions are directed, in the unification of useful international revolutionary experiences."⁵⁷

In the *Rome Theses* of 1922⁵⁸, already mentioned previously, Bordiga specifies the relationships between the historical situation, the formation and development of the revolutionary party, the influence on the class, and tactics. At the center of the arguments is still the unity of theory and action with the relative consequences that the breakdown of this unity can have on the party.

The theses will be criticized by an official letter from the Presidium of the Communist International, a letter written by Radek and then withdrawn because it was deemed "inappropriate". In this letter the theoretical approach is overlooked and the Comintern's directive on the conquest of the majority, on the question of the united front and on the slogan of the Workers' Government is simply reiterated. By now the International proceeds with stock phrases, the letter is of deadly, bureaucratic squalor, and Bordiga responds in kind: he writes just as bureaucratically to the party newspaper *Lo Stato Operaio*, asking them to inform his readers that it has no "official" value, and the newspaper publishes it.⁵⁹ He predicts that at this rate there will not only be a disaster as regards the action of the masses and the party's influence on them, but the internal cohesion of the communist organization will also be threatened.

In 1923 the International thought of strengthening the threatened cohesion by co-opting the "dissident" elements into the governing apparatus. At first the centrists remained hesitant when faced with requests to hold management positions in the Comintern. Bordiga urges them not to accept:

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ 'Rassegna Comunista', 30th January 1922

⁵⁹ Published in 'Bilan', n. 26 in december 1936, pag. 882.

"You will not escape the dilemma: either give up any desire to resist Moscow's directives, or embrace them like a cross without protesting anymore, or leave even partial leadership of the party."⁶⁰

The appeal falls on deaf ears. In Italy, even if the vast majority of the party is with Bordiga and the Left, a small number of leaders are in fact already with Moscow even on questions of principle. Until now, however, organizational problems only exist with the Comintern, which tries, without success, to have Bordiga replaced as party leader with Tasca (from the right), who was in Moscow at that time.

In the battle against the degeneration of the Communist International, Bordiga is isolated even though he has the entire base on his side. But this basis has no influence whatsoever on the behavior of the International. In the end, as we have seen, the defections and purges begin, first at the top, then in the peripheral management bodies, then in the sections.

Also in 1923, a "lucky" police operation led to the arrest of Bordiga and other communist leaders who were reported for plotting against the state. The adjective is Bordiga's: the party's security structure was police-proof.

The trial ends with the acquittal of those arrested, the thesis supported by Bordiga being accepted in practice: a conspiracy would be possible in a completely different situation; but in a different situation the power would not act with ordinary laws (courts etc.), it would act with extraordinary laws; *"It is not a paradox to conclude that if there is a trial, there is no conspiracy."*⁶¹

In prison Bordiga manages to establish a communication channel with the outside world and send coded messages. He draws up a "manifesto" against the positions of the International and invites his companions in the leading group to sign it. They reluctantly accept, except Gramsci, who doesn't feel like clashing with Moscow. Without unanimity the document is abandoned.

Taking advantage of the fact that Bordiga was in prison, the responsibility of the party passed to Togliatti and Terracini who were thoroughly influenced by the Comintern. In the centrists' conception of the party, political struggle becomes the rule and Togliatti confesses in his correspondence that Bordiga must be removed politically. Gramsci is afraid of the reactions of the base and hesitates. The party is no longer what its founder intended.

In the 1924 elections, the Comintern and the new party leadership tried (naively or provocatively) to tie Bordiga to parliamentary responsibilities. The enormous influence of the party's founder on members and the electorate would in fact represent a sure means of obtaining a large number of votes. But Bordiga

⁶⁰ *Letter to Togliatti*, 20 July 1923

⁶¹ The defense of the communists in a memorial by Bordiga, in *The trial of the Italian communists* ed. PCI publishing bookshop, 1924.

refuses. He does not appeal to his traditional abstentionist position, but opposes the same reasons that made him refuse management positions.

In May 1924, a clandestine party conference was held in Como. *"The failure of the Italian proletariat in the post-war period... demonstrates that a heterogeneous party or a bloc of different parties will never provide the general staff of the victorious revolution"*⁶², says Bordiga. Gramsci is still linked to the prospects outlined with the founding of the party in Livorno, but he says that we need to overcome the *Rome Theses* and find an agreement with the Comintern: *"It is not so necessary to have a discussion of principle... but rather to envisage practical solutions to immediate problems"*⁶³.

Democratic centralism still requires the presentation of theses and voting on them. The Left has the support of 35 out of 45 federations and the Youth Federation, the center has 3, the right has 5, two abstain. It is evidently not a question of internal democracy, but of historical relations that are taking shape. The Comintern will impose on the party the new center, minority, non-homogeneous, disorientated by the responsibility attributed to it, fearful of the reactions that the party base can still develop in the case of a frontal attack against Bordiga's person.

At the V Congress of the Communist International (from 17 June to 8 July 1924), the Left reintroduces the Theses on the tactics of the International already presented at the IV Congress. Bordiga realizes that a left is emerging in the Russian party, but he does not intend to take sides, his intention is always to overcome the federalism of the national parties to reach a truly world party. The swerve to the left made by Zinoviev at the V Congress is too openly due to the mistakes made by the Comintern regarding the German situation. The Brandler group cannot be considered⁶⁴ the only one responsible for the defeats, given that it applied the frontist directives of the Fourth Congress; one cannot even adopt a "left-wing" language just because the change of direction in the KPD was agreed to, with which the German left took control of the party.

In the current situation, Bordiga asks, we do not want so much the formal turn to the left, but rather the *"general rectification of the International"*. The slogan of the "workers' government" was no less ambiguous and dangerous than that of the "united front" which, in the tactical oscillations of the Comintern, it was supposed to replace.

⁶² Divisions and controversies in the proletarian camp, in 'Lo Stato Operaio', 20 March 1924.

⁶³ A. Gramsci, *Introduction*, in Lo stato Operaio n. 19, 5 June 1924.

⁶⁴ With the leadership of the VKPD, Heinrich Brandler promoted the so-called 'March action', an insurrectionary attempt that led to bloody repression and was the subject of harsh conflict in discussions on tactics and the united front in the world communist movement. The Italian Left, with Lenin, refused to call the action of hundreds of thousands of proletarians a 'putsch', but harshly criticized the lack of direction due to the insufficiencies in the party's conception. Brandler anticipated the positions on the united front and the workers' government in 1920.

At the V Congress Bordiga warns for the first time against the "*great danger of right-wing revisionism (which) threatens the Russian party*". Here we see the difference between his theoretical elaboration and that of Zinoviev or even Trotsky. From within the Russian party the nascent opposition was not aware of the real danger that threatened the International, and indeed never will become aware of it.

Bordiga was the first and only one to deduce from the material trend of the facts and from the "scientific" prediction that the questions of the Russian State were overlapping with those of the International, with serious danger not only for its autonomy and independence, but for the future possibility of making the transition to the One World Party. And he launched a battle that today we can say was lost from the start, but with very important contents for understanding the true extent of the catastrophe which in the short course of two years, from 1924 to 1926, destroyed the International as a party of the revolution.

He therefore opens the interventions of the PCd'I at the congress with a long speech in defense of the Marxist conception of class struggle and organisation, and resumes it in the following days; he presents the theses on the tactics of the Comintern again; replies to Zinoviev on the apparent swerve to the left; he replies several times to Bukharin on the problem of fractions and centralism; holds a long report on fascism to complement that of the previous Congress; tries to demonstrate the consequences of the tactic on trade union issues; demonstrates, with an action program for the Italian party, that it was possible and necessary to act in a coherently revolutionary way without the need for tactical oscillations.

The words flew, the lyrics remain.

In the subsequent federal congress in Naples (clandestine), Bordiga clearly and harshly exposed his positions. Gramsci intervenes by harshly criticizing them. To avoid the usual overwhelming numerical response to the positions of the Left, Gramsci closed the congress without the traditional vote on the theses.

In 1925 the internal controversy turned into open struggle. At the V Congress of the Comintern, Togliatti had openly sided against the Left for the first time and the practical consequence was a hardening of the internal struggle, which for Bordiga no longer had anything decent or communist about it. His interventions become rarer and so do his articles in the party press. In February he wrote a long article in defense of Trotsky,⁶⁵ given that the attack against them was also used in Italy against the Left. The article was not published and was immediately sent to Moscow with a request for instructions.

⁶⁵ *The Trotsky question*, 8 February 1925. Published in 'L'Unità' on 4 July.

In June-July the issue of the "Committee of Understanding" broke out. A group of comrades from the Left, exasperated by the internal party situation, created a committee with the task of gathering comrades around the old founding nucleus. Bordiga does not participate in the initiative and does not sign the documents that are circulated, but, as soon as the danger of their isolation looms amid attacks and slander of all kinds, he declares himself a member of the committee, perhaps with the intention of blocking with his authority a political struggle that was taking on tones that were not at all political. He responds to the accusation of factionalism as he had responded to the court that had imprisoned him: there is no factionalism because the material conditions for the birth of a fraction do not exist:

"we do not feel pushed, by the repeated provocations of the headquarters, to the miserable response of creating a dissident party for the use of casual leaders".⁶⁶

Amid the smear campaign against the Committee of Understanding, the Centre published Bordiga's article in defense of Trotsky to demonstrate that the accusation of Trotskyism against the Left is well founded.

The issue of the Committee of Understanding died down after a few weeks, but by then the rift was irreconcilable. In the meantime the party reorganized its workers' ranks on the basis of the factory councils, abandoning the territorial organization. Bordiga opposes this: in the party there are only communists, regardless of the class to which they belong and their profession; With the organization by firm, a gigantic step backwards of a unionist-workerist nature is taken.

It should be noted that on this issue, Trotsky is in favor of organization by the firm. This is but one aspect of the contradictions of the "Trotskyist" opposition. In fact, while Bordiga had maintained an "external" line of attack on the degeneration of the International, referring to Marxist rigor against the theoretical-tactical messes of the shapeless set of national parties influenced by the predominant Russian one, Trotsky had moved internally both within the Russian and international logic of the organization. This fact had allowed the Italian Left greater coherence (Trotsky, for example, was in favor of the united front), but also greater freedom of criticism. Trotsky had tied his hands with a compromised attitude towards Russian questions that would not abandon him until his death.

In Italy, in the party press for a year now, Bordiga's articles have been preceded by editorial italics that harshly attack him or distort his positions. Every response or rectification only precipitates the political struggle into an increasingly "anti-political" and degenerate spiral.

⁶⁶ Declaration of the members of the Committee of Understanding, in 'L'Unità', 18 July 1925.

This difficult situation, which dragged on until 1926 when at the Lyon Congress and the VI enlarged Executive, Bordiga attempted the last strenuous defense of his positions, which would leave an indelible mark on his conception of the party. He participates in both occasions of discussion for a strenuous and final defense in the face of the opportunistic capitulations of the International and the party. At the Lyon Congress the International made the Left delegates lack clandestine means, so only those aligned with the centrist positions were represented in a large majority. This time we vote and the missing votes are automatically attributed to the central office.

Bordiga presents further theses in which everything is summarized, from the Russian questions to the Italian questions, from the nature of the party to its tactics, from the policy advocated by the Left to that of the central (Ordinivism). He speaks for more than nine hours to comment on the terrible situation towards which the party and the International would be heading if the method of political struggle and the pettiness of intrigue and plea bargaining took hold.

The solution, say the *Lyon Theses*, does not lie in the national framework but in the context of a regenerated International. Otherwise the communist environment will become so poisoned as to suffocate any revolutionary possibility. The concept of the party that has taken hold has nothing to do with the needs of the revolution, because the party that is taking shape is an entity that devours itself instead of attacking its opponent.

Prophetic words, repeated to the expanded Sixth Executive of the Comintern in February.

The previous Enlarged Executive of Moscow had been organized almost entirely against "Trotskyism", with which the Italian Left had been linked. In his report, Zinoviev, with notable inconsistency had accused Bordiga of not understanding the role of the party when the revolution slows down, and therefore of rejecting the tactics of the united front and of all the partial demands which, although Bolshevically, were aimed at achieving the final goal. Bukharin had accused the Left of Luxemburgism and syndicalism, pushing the invention to the point of drawing a parallel with the "Dutch school" of the Second International.⁶⁷ Bukharin himself then explained the necessity of the "anti-Trotskyist" struggle: differences in an opposition party are one thing, those in a party in power are another when the discussions and political struggle have immediate and negative repercussions on general politics.

With this, Bukharin had decreed the defeat of the Left (and temporarily of the Marxist movement) with a hint that Russian issues were gaining the upper hand in the International and it would have to bend to the needs of the Russian

⁶⁷ These are the 'tribunists', an opposition group to the large social democratic parties that controlled the Second International.

State. Exactly what will be Bordiga's accusation in the next meeting and directly against Stalin.

The VI Enlarged Executive is the last party meeting in which Bordiga participates. The confusion is great. Zinoviev joins Trotsky in an opposition bloc. He used the phrase "socialism in one country" for the first time to confirm Bordiga's concerns. The international opposition seems to be expanding, but its unity is fictitious, due only to the common contrast with the Stalinist leadership.⁶⁸ But there is, in fact, no common program whatsoever.

Bordiga's main speech occupies an entire session and represents a summary of the reasons that led him to assume an open opposition role, bordering on indiscipline and "fractionism", towards the party and the International. The Russian revolution represented a grandiose event, he states, but in the Western revolution we need to go *further* because Lenin's work of theoretical restoration against the Second International is not enough. On the other hand, Lenin's history is the history of factions, he continues: it is not the factions that make parties opportunist but it is the opportunism that penetrates them shouting for unity at all costs.

We must go *beyond* the great teaching of the International. We must denounce the party that lives from a struggle against itself and arrive at a *communist environment* in which we remove "*from our minds and hearts*" all the bourgeois categories that this society inculcates in men. We need to arrive at a world party in which it is not possible for one part, be it an individual or a group, to externalize or dominate the whole.

Despite forty years of isolation, this concept recurred unchanged at the end of the war. In 1945 he did not personally participate in the "foundation" of the new party. The organization was born with too many members who well represent the confusion existing in the post-war shambles. Many are former partisans who fought under the illusion of being able to keep their weapons for the revolution after the war was over. In the confusion, many marched on April 25 to celebrate the democratic freedom brought by the Allied weapons. At the beginning of the year Bordiga wrote in Naples his theses on *the nature, function and tactics of the revolutionary party* in which he reiterated the dialectical unity of theory, action and organisation. For the first time in history, he writes, repeating Marx's words, a party will not fight to bring a new ruling class to power, but will direct the proletariat towards the establishment of "*productive relations which allow the elimination of economic pressure and class-on-class exploitation*". He then explains why the International made mistakes by analyzing their nature and demonstrating that you can move towards victory only if you don't make them again. The new party of the revolution will distinguish itself from any previous organization because it will no longer

⁶⁸ *Letter to Karl Korsch*, 28 October 1926, published for the first time in 'Prometeo' (organ of the Fraction abroad) in 1928.

participate in the normal political life of the bourgeois world made up of maneuvers, expedients, alliances, elective mechanisms.

The theses were published in May 1947.⁶⁹ However, in 1948 most of the sections presented electoral lists while the party still functioned according to the old democratic method.

In 1951 the previous materials were further arranged in the *Theses Characteristics of the Party*.⁷⁰ The basis of the formation of the revolutionary leadership is not individual conscience nor the ability or culture of the leaders: "*it consists only in the organic unity of the party*" , where "unity" is not intended only in the sense of union, but above all of harmony between the different functions. Center, periphery, relationship with the class and the "external" world are all one and there is no hierarchical priority of any part over the other. The old conception of the party in which enlightened, knowledgeable and conscious individuals and leaders act, must be replaced with that of "*a fabric and a system which within the proletarian class organically has the function of carrying out the revolutionary task in all its aspects and in all the complex phases*".

Having materialistically understood the diversity between the Russian revolution and the Western revolution, we must also understand the diversity between the Bolshevik party, its tactics and its strategy during a double revolution (democratic, anti-feudal and, at the same time, proletarian): "*It is absurd to carry this strategy to the situation in which the bourgeois state has a semi-century-old democratic tradition behind it and with parties that accept its constitutionalism.*"⁷¹

The party form, the organ of the class in its revolution, does not arise from a model thought up by someone, but is imposed by historical necessity. For this reason, in the theses cited there is a long part that describes the subsequent "*historical waves of opportunism*" : the first, anarcho-Sorelian; the second, social democratic; the third, Stalinist. In the new party there will be no elections of leaders, votes on opposing theories or fights for places in the internal hierarchy.

"No movement can triumph in history without theoretical continuity, which is the experience of past struggles. It follows that the party prohibits the personal freedom of elaboration and lucubration of new schemes and explanations of the contemporary social world; it prohibits the individual freedom of analysis, criticism and perspective even for the most intellectually prepared among its adherents; it defends the solidity of a theory which is not the result of blind faith, but is the content of proletarian class science, built with centuries-old material,

⁶⁹ In 'Prometheus' n. 7, now in *The assault of revisionist doubt on the foundations of Marxist revolutionary theory* ed. Quad. Int. cit. May 1992.

⁷⁰ Exhibited at a general meeting in Florence on 8-9 December 1951 and published in full later in *II programma Comunista* n. 16, September 1962. Now in *In Defense of the Continuity of the Communist Program* , ed. Program Com., Milan 1970

⁷¹ Characteristic theses

*not from thought of men but by the force of material facts, reflected in the historical consciousness of a revolutionary class and crystallized in its party*⁷²

2.7. Organic Centralism

It has been said that the organic conception of the party in Bordiga is 'mystical' or 'messianic' or 'biological' or 'cybernetic' etc., but the various definitions of a 'Bordigist' theory of the party do not fit such a conception.

There is no such thing as a Bordigist party theory, nor should it be arbitrarily drawn from Bordiga's writings.

The path that leads him to organic centralism is actually a very short one, and it was developed empirically in his first years of his political activity within the PSI. In those years he does nothing more than apply his Marxist knowledge to the reality of the party, which is a reality far removed from the needs of revolution. His opposition to the old socialist notables, the Freemasons, the ultrariformists and the trade unionists is a practical one: you can never lead a victorious revolution with these kinds of political instruments. As if he had said that you cannot plane a board with a sponge, you need a planer.

In the Rome Theses of 1922, he reiterated this concept with regard to the new Communist Party, the International, and extended the field to the tactics of the two organisations. In the same year, a few weeks later, he wrote an article on the democratic principle, in which he systematically collected previous observations on the same subject.

Never mind those who see mysticism and messianism wherever there is no hierarchical-voluntarist-Stalinist conception of the party. But the organic conception is also wrong. Organic centralism has repeatedly been compared to the functioning of a living organism, one that is formed in an embryo, grows, ages, and dies; it has differentiated organs, a brain, a nervous system, limbs. The organisation of living cells in an individual animal does not yet represent well the dialectics and dynamics of the revolutionary party. This is formed and developed according to more complex determinations than those that determine individual life because some determinations are historical, they depend on the maturity of social conditions, something to which the individual organism is very insensitive.

Moreover, the biological organism also has a biological cycle. Its cells multiply from an embryo that already contains all the information of the developed individual, then they degenerate and die, and the individual disappears. The formal party has no predetermined cycles: it can be born,

⁷² Ibid.

develop, degenerate, and die according to different criteria than the animal set of cells, whereas the historical party never disappears.

The mechanically 'cybernetic' conception is also wrong. The two-way flow of information that Bordiga assumes between the centre and periphery of the party, without a prevalence of one or the other, cannot be compared to the thermostat system⁷³, as far as it is corrected by 'intelligent' sensors and processors in the cybernetic sense. The cybernetic system is a system in equilibrium, eternally repeating itself no matter how complex one wants to construct it.

Bordiga, like most scientists, observed and recorded the historical becoming of the party form with the classical experimental method. First comes praxis, on this a theory is developed, and then this is verified if it can predict the phenomenon in its even artificial repeatability. Thus, once the party possesses the theory, the process of action can be reversed: representing consciousness and will, it can dictate tactics. This is why when the International had its tactics dictated by 'situations' Bordiga rebelled against this method, demonstrating that there was a flaw in the theory behind it.

In 1924 he wrote an article on organisation and discipline in the party in which all the developed elements of organic centralism are already present:

'The action the party carries out and the tactics it adopts, i.e. how it acts outwardly, have in turn consequences for its internal organisation and constitution. The party is fatally compromised by those who, in the name of unlimited discipline, claim to keep it available for any action, tactic, or strategic manoeuvre, that is, without well-defined limits known to all militants'.⁷⁴

The party is therefore not only forged by the class struggle but is forged by its very action with the class, it is a product and factor of history, and its nature is dynamic in that all elements, external and internal, contribute to it being an element of victory or defeat.

Individuals, leaders, thinkers or mere followers have the same function. Not in the democratic and egalitarian sense, but in the sense that they can be equally decisive in keeping the party on the revolutionary path. If the party degenerates, there is no 'blame', but facts to be studied and not repeated; there are battles to be fought without moralistic accusations, trials, self-criticism, expulsions or shootings. If the battle is lost, one starts afresh by defending the theory, breaking the old degenerate organisation, passing on the baton of the 'historical relay' to new revolutionary generations.

⁷³ We use the thermostat comparison here as it was used by Leo Apostel (of the school of Jean Piaget) in *Dialectical Materialism and Scientific Method* to draw somewhat incorrect conclusions about dialectics and epistemology. Ed. Einaudi, Turin 1968.

⁷⁴ Communist organization and discipline, premises of the question, in 'Prometeo' n. 5, May 1924.

All this does not represent the 'Bordighist theory of the party' and its organic centralism, but the identification, within Marxist theory, of which instruments are suitable for the victory of the revolution. Organic centralism is not a kind of rule or statute but the way the revolution has given itself to overcome the organisational categories of bourgeois society. Revolution, Bordiga recalls in *The Democratic Principle*, is not a question of form, but of content. The content is this: in the party, the individual must be placed in an organic relationship with the whole, hence the ego must be negated; class hatred must take on a positive valence for the affirmation of the future society (i.e. we must overcome the crude communism recalled by Marx in the Manuscripts)⁷⁵; hatred for capitalism must go hand in hand with hatred for the organisational forms of class-divided societies; the adoption of organisational forms typical of class society (state, army, etc.) must be accompanied by the awareness that they are transitory; 'the abuse of organisational formalisms without a vital reason has been and always will be a defect and a suspicious and stupid danger' and the party must not lack 'the courage to fight for such a result, a true anticipation of tomorrow's history and society'.⁷⁶

The negation of individualism is not to be confused with the democratic negation of the individual, achieved by barrack-room or egalitarian vote-counting. The party organism is made up of elements that are by their nature differentiated and find their proper place in all the differentiated manifestations of 'energy'.

It is not an abstract theory but the pure and simple application of a method that anticipates when conditions permit, future relations within the human species. There is no direct relationship between the 'chiefs' and the formation of a bureaucratic hierarchy, Bordiga recalls when commemorating Lenin. There is no automatism between the function of the chief and prevarication, the formation of oligarchies, the authoritarianism typical of bourgeois organisation. The leader and the instruments of party leadership are functional to what represents a goal beyond capitalist society. They are instruments forged by collective labour and by this alone express it in its entirety.

In denying the traditional head of societies divided into hierarchies and classes, Bordiga does not deny the natural differentiation of social cells, but he does deny that they can individually arrogate to themselves the claim to guide history or even the tactics of revolutionary organisation. Let us not fall into the absurdity, he says in his lecture on Lenin, of treating as a new revolutionary

⁷⁵ *The theory of the primary function of the political party*, in 'The communist programme', nn. 18-22 of 1958. Now in *Recognizing communism* (chap. Notes on the 'manuscripts' of 1844) ed. Quad. Int. cit. May 1992.

⁷⁶ Additional theses on the historical task etc. cit.

morality things that were settled four centuries ago by a Machiavelli. Let us put the battaloccios in their rightful place.

Yet Bordiga was one of those few revolutionary leaders who was able to give direction to events when social balances tended to break down and the revolution matured. In other words, he was able to implement that reversal of praxis⁷⁷ which is the only plausible manifestation of the will, through the party organ when, according to one of his expressions, society became polarised.

Discipline at its 'orders' was enthusiastic and spontaneous. The Communist Party of Italy, of which it was both a factor and a product at the same time, had no need for supreme leaders, large executive apparatuses, bureaucratic secretariats, boards of arbitrators, rules and statutes. It had no moustachioed 'Fathers', 'Luminous Guides' or 'Trackers' to hand down to history with a capital letter. Lacking the revolutionary drive, the historical polarisation, Bordiga was first isolated and then erased from the official historiography of the so-called workers' parties. The history of a few years condensed one of his maxims: 'The workers will win if they understand that no one has to come. The expectation of the Messiah and the cult of genius, explicable for Peter and Carlyle, are for a Marxist only miserable covers of impotence. The revolution will rise again tremendously, but anonymously'.⁷⁸

2.8. Economic and Social Structure of Stalin's Russia⁷⁹

For many years after the war, the proletariat looked to Russia as the country of realised socialism. The total blindness induced by the indoctrination of the falsely communist and socialist parties did not allow the proletariat to glimpse even a glimmer of Russian social reality. Moreover, the division of the various countries into blocs due to the Cold War was reflected within the proletariat, and the crusade in defence of one or the other social paradise even led to physical clashes not only with the state police.

Even within the post-war Internationalist Communist Party, the Russian question was not at all clear. And it was necessary to write a mountain of material to make a detailed analysis of it. The most important prejudice that had to be demolished immediately was the one common to all Trotskyists: first there was the physical class of the bourgeoisie, now in their place is the state; it may not be socialism, but it's not capitalism either; the economy is capitalist, but the

⁷⁷ *The reversal of praxis* , 1951

⁷⁸ *Carlilian fantasies* , in 'The communist program' n. 9 of 1953. Now in *Il battelocchio nella storia* , ed. Quad. Int.

⁷⁹ A list of the texts written by Bordiga on Russia is too long to even summarize. The topic is treated in almost all post-war economic and political writings. Essential are: *Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today* , ed. Communist program, Milan 1976 and *Russia and revolution in Marxist theory* , ed. P. c., Milan 1990.

single concentration in the state makes it 'different'. They did not go so far as to say, as Trotsky did, that the bureaucracy was the new Russian capitalist class in the degenerated workers' state, but they did ask the insistent question: if there is capitalism in Russia, where then is the new bourgeois class to be found or what replaces it?

Bordiga began by demonstrating that capitalism no longer needs capitalists, as Marx and Engels had already demonstrated, the former in *Capital* and the latter in *Antidühring*. There is capital without capitalists in the form of financial capital, in the bank collection that represents the concentration of so many small capitals or shares of surplus value or shares of wages that do not find employment in society. The capitalist uses these funds that are not his own, he can even undertake a business without capital at all, simply by using this social collection. Complementary to the existence of capital without capitalists is the existence of capitalists without capital, it is enough to analyse in depth, within the most advanced capitalism, the forms of contracting, concessions etc.

The Russian phenomenon thus does not demonstrate a particularly new economic structure. It is composed of all capitalist categories: surplus value, money, wages, commodities, exchange, etc. This is sufficient for Marxist analysis.

The defence of the existence of these categories, in a so-called socialist society that must fight against encirclement, has inevitable social and political consequences. How will Russian capitalism behave towards the international working class? Will it intervene in defence of possible proletarian insurrections or will it help crush them, given that it proclaims itself the enemy of capitalism but objectively acts alongside US imperialism in the UN?

Bordiga, as usual, teaches his interlocutors how to formulate a question in a Marxist manner before answering. What is the point of questioning Russia's possible actions based only on the nature of its economy and the existence or non-existence of the bourgeois class? What is missing is an international proletarian movement that also influences Russia. Today we have the opposite, it is the Russian state that influences the international movement.

So the Russian economic reality and the action of the Russian state can be assessed from the dynamics of the events that led to this situation: October revolution, Lenin's retreat to the NEP, victory of Stalinism, international tactical confusion, influence of the Russian state on the other parties, World War with participation of the proletariat in defending the anti-fascist alliance, dissolution of the International, fraud of socialism in one country.

Will Russia be on the side of the revolution if it breaks out in the West? It depends. It does not decide the capitalist or socialist or hybrid nature of its

particular achievements as a nation. It decides its international standing after the history of forty years and decides above all its interests as a state, because proletarian internationalism has been abandoned.

Responding to a party comrade⁸⁰ before the split of '52, Bordiga re-proposes the question in the form of a triad, as if the maximum conditions for revolution existed: the transformation of the economy; the communist party and the International; the revolutionary state.

Single question but posed in a dynamic sense: do the three conditions march in the 'right' direction, i.e. towards world revolution?

Answer for the period from 1917 to 1920: yes-yes-yes

Answer for the period 1921 to 1922: no-yes-yes.

Answer for the period 1922 to 1926: no-no-yes.

Answer for the period 1926 onwards: no-no-no.

It is evident that there is no direct, mechanical link between the three conditions of the triad. The answer can give various combinations, all plausible and 'right'. As a counter-evidence, it had already happened in history, says Bordiga. During the French Revolution the most advanced country in the world in a capitalist sense was England and there was no danger of feudal involution. But English party policy was anti-Jacobin and reactionary, no less so than that of the Austrian and Russian aristocracies. And the foreign policy of the English state? Also counter-revolutionary, both against the Convention and the Napoleonic army, the implementers of Jacobin reforms. The answer then again is not unequivocal but is: yes-no-no.

'I wanted to establish that the 'yes' or 'no' on the internal economic process does not, in itself, automatically determine the other two answers. The totality of the three answers depends on having understood the entire international historical framework, Marxistically, dialectically⁸¹

This means that irrespective of the nature of the economy and the existence of more or less bourgeois classes within Russia, the general policy of its state is determined by the historical dynamic that has made it economically more advanced than in the tsarist era, but politically counter-revolutionary to the proletariat.

⁸⁰ Letter to Onorato Damen, 31 July 1951, in O. Damen, *Amadeo Bordiga, validity and limits of an experience*, ed. EPI, Milan 1971.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Bordiga is not saying that partial issues are unimportant, but that they are not useful in clarifying to the proletariat what Russian policy necessarily is and will be. The example is taken to its extreme consequences by considering two series in parallel, one of economic types and the other of political power relations.

First series: free competition capitalism and personal companies; monopoly capitalism; parasitic financial capitalism; generalised state dirigisme; state capitalism.

Second series: parliamentary democracy; imperialistic totalitarianism; revolutionary proletarian power; degenerating proletarian power; degenerated proletarian power altogether.

It would be arbitrary, however the series were specified, to relate them by connecting the individual elements. The two series do not form a bi-univocal correspondence, as one would say in mathematics, and 'every type of the first series can at time x and place y coincide with every other type of the second series'.⁸²

Perfectly communist proletarian dictatorship could exist in country x if private sectors still existed, even if the entire economy were still capitalist. But bourgeois domination could very well exist even with large sectors of the economy being statist or even communist: when something burns, the firemen put out the fire without anyone directly paying the bill for the service, and they receive their livelihood even if there are no fires.

In this regard, it must be remembered that the payment of wages always implies a capitalist economy, because surplus value is merely the consequence of this. Elsewhere⁸³ Bordiga shows that the social waste of surplus-value is not so much due to the existence of capitalists but to that of capitalism. If the working day in the world is, say, ten hours, the capitalist gets roughly half an hour, the worker, if all goes well, roughly three hours, and the capitalist wastes the other six and a half hours. By eliminating the capitalists with state capitalism, that half-hour is avoided: not an enormous achievement.

The revolutionary imposition of capitalism in Russia, on the other hand, is a great historical achievement, despite Stalin. But the permanence of the wage and above all the lack of agrarian accumulation (accelerated transformation of agricultural products into commodities) have produced Russia's social backwardness, which is accompanied by good technical performances in heavy industry and good accumulation rates in industrial urban areas. In addition to

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *Marxist economic science as a revolutionary program*, series of meetings that appeared in *The Communist Program* from 1959 to 1963, now in the text of the same title ed. Quad. Int., December 1992.

producing for self-consumption and the however miserable personal enrichment, the kolkhoz maintained the social barbarity of the land-bound family, of limited contacts, of the ownership of the pig and the hen, of the private garden, in short, of all the pettiness of private food production within the restricted sphere of kinship ('The Gallic Form of Colcosianism').⁸⁴

Bordiga was sure: these relations will break the lie of the socialist state, of socialism in one country. Russia will not stand up to the dollar and the international markets. As soon as its declining rates of development are on par with the rest of the world, then the great confession will take place. With the recognition that the goal is full capitalism, not only Stalin and his 'dictatorship' will be jettisoned, but also Marxism and Lenin⁸⁵, to the great advantage of the future revolution, which will be able to regain its rights without the monstrous tutelage of the Moscow deviation.

2.9. Utopia, Science, Action

It is necessary to reiterate that scientific and critical socialism demands the union of theory, organisation and action, and that Bordiga spent his life as a militant trying to achieve this union, first as a revolutionary leader in the PSI, the PCd'I and the International, and later as an anonymous militant in the internationalist group that sought to lay the foundations of a hardened movement for the new revolution.

In the scientific field, the method of combining experience, its formalisation, the speculative processes that project attempts at knowledge beyond the results achieved and, finally, the verification of the predictability of events is well established. If there are strong reminiscences of idealism and the rejection of dialectical materialism and determinism in this field, it is because the bourgeoisie is marked by the need to mystify its greatest contradiction: to expand its knowledge of the physical world, of the dynamics of processes, of the irreversibility of these, and at the same time to cling to the eternity and immutability of capitalist relations.

In the social field, the self-preservative tendency of the bourgeoisie is stronger, and even stronger is its despicable influence on the revolutionary theory and organisations of the proletariat. It was in this field that the gigantic effort of Bordiga and the militants who tried to give life to the new movement unfolded.

⁸⁴ *Marxist economic science as a revolutionary program*, series of meetings that appeared in *The Communist Program* from 1959 to 1963, now in the text of the same title ed. Quad. Int., December 1992.

⁸⁵ *Much more is expected*, in "The communist program", n. 3 of 1957.

Just as ancient science tried to devise a mental model of the physical world, so we continue today to search for an ideal model of society that could overcome this capitalism whose effects are no longer pleasing even to capitalists.

The fact is that 'the revolutionary proletarian movement possesses the positive theory of the social unfolding and conditions of the communist revolution', the bourgeoisie and the movements influenced by it, do not.⁸⁶ The revolutionary proletarian movement concretely represents the dynamic process leading to socialism; bourgeois movements, however 'progressive', can at best arrive at an ideal image of societies that do not and cannot exist. Utopian socialism 'wants' to elaborate the future by disregarding the determinations of the past and present; Marxism says no, one cannot 'invent' a human system as a product of thought, one must master the laws of social motion and foresee what its consequences will be in order to apply force and will, through the party, where and when necessary. An arbitrary and romantic anticipation of the future is not enough, we need a scientific prediction and this is only made possible by the maturing of the social productive force, the antagonisms it generates and the forms it anticipates without being aware of them, forms of activity without mercantile exchange and organic, non-competitive forms of sociality.

The first utopianism, that of Thomas Moore, Thomas Campanella up to Fourier and Owen, was justified because of the immaturity of social relations, but from Proudhon onwards, all utopianism is reactionary because it tends to nail the proletariat to the capitalist reality to which it attempts to apply fantastic variations.

The need and therefore the will to 'change things' has always been a positive impulse, pushed to the maximum in the periods preceding a social change. It presupposes experience of the past and serious knowledge of the present, as well as a non-fictional notion of the goal to be achieved. Marxism unites all past history and does not mock the myth of antiquity or the naive progress of earlier science, but rather records them positively for the understanding of subsequent historical leaps.

If the biological instinct is 'hereditary knowledge of a specific plan of life' in which the past is imprinted, so that with the present life facts useful to life itself are avoided or realised in the future, 'flying through the whole [human] cycle, communism is the knowledge of a plan of life for the species'.⁸⁷

Bordiga fought all his life to demolish the theoretical deformations that present Marxism as a perfect construction to describe the present society and to

⁸⁶ *Property and capital*, chapter XVII, in 'Prometheus' n. 10 et seq., June 1948. Now in the text with the same title ed. Quad. Int. November 1991.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

indicate the ultimate goal, but incapable of guiding the daily life of the organization (party), of developing a coherent tactic, to understand what a revolution and above all a counter-revolution is. It is not Marxism that arrives at "sceptical, agnostic and elastic positions regarding the precise itinerary of the revolutionary future".⁸⁸

The new revolutionary organization, therefore, cannot be based on a system revealed, neither by a God nor a prophet, but not even by a Leader, by a group of individuals full of will, wisdom and strength. He will not be able to be content with scrutinizing the future, which would be too little, nor with wanting the future, which would be too much, but will have to "preserve the line of the future of his own class... The communist movement is not a question of pure doctrine; a question of pure will; however, the defect of doctrine paralyzes him, the defect of will paralyzes him. And defect means absorption of other people's doctrines, of other people's will".⁸⁹

2.10. The Immediate Programme of the Revolution

Wanting the future would be too much, but in the developed West capitalism has reached such a level that, as we have seen, it already contains within itself forms of activity without mercantile exchange and without competition, not aimed, in short, at achieving maximum profit, activities generally carried out by the State, but also by organized groups of volunteers etc.

In a meeting held in Forlì in 1952, Bordiga outlined a list of measures that the proletarian revolution could face in a mature capitalist context. This is the only time in which he explains the physical measures in a very succinct list.

The list responded, more than to the decision to write an *organic program* for the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the need for ruthless criticism of opportunism. The latter was and is so entangled in the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation that it confuses its own program with that of the bourgeois by using the parameters of current society to measure the possible well-being of "citizens", to adapt their behavior to safeguard "growth" , i.e. the increase in the Gross Domestic Product, or, a more recent and very indicative fact, the responsibility towards the behavior of the "markets", a modern phenomenon of parasitism implicit in the proliferation of fictitious capital.

The points of the "programme", nine in all, are explicitly written to ridicule and cover the Stalinist political clan with infamy and, even if they have never been developed, they are sufficient to understand the true extent of a victorious

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

revolution in an area geographical area that is not grappling with backward phases of development. We report a telegraphic commentary that integrates the concepts with arguments drawn from Bordiga's overall work:

1. Divestment. It is a question of positively applying the Marxist criticism of the "domination of dead labor over living labor", that is, of inverting the relationship between the mass of production useful to capital and that useful to the life of men.
2. Increase in "production costs". As long as the market and money, and therefore wages, exist, the revolution will have to modify the current relationship between necessary work and surplus labour, that is, between wages and surplus value, also through...
3. A drastic reduction in working time, at least to half of the current hours. For Bordiga, the drastic reduction of working time is not only a goal to be included in the immediate program of the revolution, but a perennial request of the proletarian movement also in its daily activity against capitalism (trade union activity). *"The communist party defends the future situation of reduced working time for purposes useful to life, and works according to that result of the future, leveraging all real developments. That conquest which seems miserably expressed in hours and reduced to a material count, represents a gigantic victory, the greatest possible, compared to the necessity that enslaves and drags us all".*⁹⁰
4. "Underproduction" plan. The point is somewhat provocative because it talks about the forced reduction of consumption which is artificially induced by the intrinsic needs of capitalist accumulation. This is the exact opposite of what every opportunist preaches to the working class today as yesterday, urging them to fight for an impossible bourgeois society of well-being.

Underproduction is therefore intended to recover a natural sense of existence, not so much for individuals, who would feel deprived of goods perhaps considered useful when they are nothing but harmful, but for the species as a whole. Implicit in an underproduction plan is a large reduction in energy consumption, which today is wasted at an insane rate. Also implicit is the concentration of resources on the study and project of "non-exhaustible" sources, which would be conducted with criteria outside of capitalist logic, something that cannot touch the current "ecologists", all committed, without exclusion, to "improve" capitalism.

⁹⁰ Genoa meeting of 26 April 1953, in *For the organic arrangement of communist principles*, ed. Quad. Int. Turin 1991.

5. Breaking company boundaries. Production anarchy is one of the major causes of waste. Not only does social production clash with the private appropriation of the company, but this has territorial limits, problems of distribution, supply and knowledge of final consumption, problems that can be resolved by a central organic knowledge that supervises a plan distribution of raw materials, workforce and consumption in general.
6. End of the contradictions between the ages of man. This is one of the most infamous contradictions of class societies and capitalism in particular. The appearance of the patriarchal family, of private property and the State, then of capitalist social production, led to a progressive commodification not only of human activities but of man himself. Labor power is a commodity like any other, but childhood, old age and illness are also translated into hard cash by capitalist society.

A humane society destroys the mercantile relationship between society itself and individuals of various ages to promote the satisfaction of needs regardless of the profit that the operation may entail. The concept of "social metabolism" calls for the responsibility of the whole society towards not only the immediate producers, but also towards those who will be producers in the future and those who have already been producers and pass on their experience.

Implicit in this process is that the clear separation between study and work, between work and "pension" will be abolished; The so-called mercantile assistance will be abolished, both that managed by the State and that "capitalised" by private insurance.

The specific human activity of different ages and sexes will be harmonized as a whole that cannot be divided into "specializations" similar to those existing in the current world of work or in the current family. The same family will tend to change its current nature.

7. End of the contradiction between urban areas and the rest of the territory. The monstrous housing concentrations will have to begin to be drastically reduced and the population redistributed. In part this is already happening, but in a completely capitalist way, that is, inhabitants are being expelled from city centers to make room for offices and commercial activities. The population is not redistributed over the territory but is concentrated in smaller peripheral areas, with enormous expenditure of energy for commuting transport, which in some parts of the developed world has reached absurd limits. On the other hand, some once inhabited areas are abandoned and the previous, less inhuman habitat is lost in favor of new concentrations.

Naturally, man's relationship with the environment will be studied in a scientific and non-commercial way, while the movements of people and materials will lose their current character of marked anarchy.

The current mania for speed will also be overcome, which is nothing more than a trivial reflection of the combination of time and money, in favor of a pace of life more compatible with the biological rhythms of the species.

8. Abolition of the division of labor. All points of the immediate program are achievable in the context of mature capitalism, but not all of them can have effects overnight. One of the most difficult situations to die will be the differentiation between jobs which today are considered to be of a different nature. Careerism and the race for prestigious positions, phenomena that take degenerate forms in all environments, are only one aspect of the division of labor. While it will be relatively easy to make the social difference between intellectual work and manual work disappear, already mixed today through certain uses of so-called free time, it will be more difficult to eliminate the very concept that intellectual work is of a higher level than manual work. The realization of this can only happen through the setting of the first years of life and experience, where study and work activities of all kinds will be harmoniously distributed.
9. Abolition of commodified information. One of the fundamental tasks of the revolution, of course, is to take over society's information systems. In this sense it is not *just* a question of directly managing the world of schools, television, the press, entertainment, which would simply change hands. A state television is no different from a private television if only a "management" factor is involved. If the revolution has truly won and has therefore already brought about a profound change in social expectations, it is a question of revolutionizing that world too, given that in its totality it is "made" of materials that come directly from the dominant ideology and the consequent social superstructure .

The new information technologies will be able to have a development consistent with their potential only in a non-capitalist environment, and this applies to the specific field of information but also to all other fields.

The introduction of machines in a capitalist environment is a necessity and a condemnation at the same time, due to the resulting fall in the rate of profit, while in a non-capitalist social environment it represents a real liberation of human labor and life time.

The concern of the immediate program of the revolution for the areas of mature capitalism is closely linked to the difference between utopia and

communism. Many of the program's premises already exist, ready to be freed from the chains that prevent their expression.

"For determinists, every present motion is a fact that cannot be denied. But only the communists bring the fact of representing the future of the movement, that is, of the fighting class, and fighting to suppress the classes."⁹¹

For Bordiga and for the movement in which he played part and represented the program of the *future* society is a given of the *present*. Reduced to the essentials, this is the real difference between a utopian and a communist revolutionary. And this is also why Bordiga never wrote a detailed program of the future revolution.

2.11. Overcoming of Individualistic Itches

From 1945 to 1952 Bordiga fought for a selection of forces that confusingly referred to the historical "Italian" Left. This selection took place through a painful split, but in the early 1960s the problems recurred: the party was unable to achieve the union of theory, organization and action. Democratic methods survived, even if not openly, among the comrades, while the defect of doctrine and will manifested itself through the absorption of the doctrine and will of others, as described in *Property and Capital* already cited. In 1961, the draft of a work on the party was published in the newspaper, in which particular emphasis was placed on the communist organization as a prefiguration of the characteristics of the future society. It was an imperfect draft written by a group of French comrades, full of defects and with an obsessive use of the German word *Gemeinwesen* to indicate the overcoming of the old organizational categories.⁹²

For Bordiga it was a way to test how outdated the old conceptions of democratic centralism were, a *probe*, as he would have called it, to feel the fever of the party. The fever was high, in fact.

The lesson of 1952 had been so poorly digested that a number of militants, perhaps the majority of the party, started an internal discussion on organizational issues, especially in connection with the problem of activity and its infamous "effectiveness".

The few remaining documents and letters show how Bordiga was furious at the massacre. Under his control, the party organ came out with an avalanche of documentary material "for theses on the question of party organization", theses which he never wrote, since they gave way to theses on the organic

⁹¹ *Property and Capital*

⁹² *Origin and function of the party form*, in *The communist program* n. 13 of 1961. Now in the text with the same title ed. Quad. Int. cit., January 1994.

conception of the party in relation to the history and maturity of events⁹³, consistently with the always supported indication of overcoming the need for statutory rules.

Lack of doctrine and will had therefore been transformed into absorption of other people's doctrines and other people's will. On the one hand, the misunderstanding of the nature of today's revolutionary party and therefore the link to the old third-internationalist conception; on the other, the rejection of the party because it was third-internationalist. We do not know whether Bordiga's intentions were to stem the aforementioned avalanche of material from both opposing logical-formal conceptions of the problem of the party organism, but unfortunately he, or rather, the party as a whole, failed to do so.

There are some issues that take on fundamental importance in party life and in internal discussions. These are issues, such as the question of the party, the trade union question, the question of indifferentism, which can remain in the background and trigger controversy and struggle on secondary aspects, real catalysts which cause the chemical reaction without participating in it, until they explode, coming to the sunlight when fractions and splits have now formed.

The discussion between those who support different things based on the same texts considered sacred and immutable, degenerates into a destructive struggle as the reference text is stretched according to the logic of the theses to which one wants it to adhere, never the opposite. This is a recurring error in the Marxist movement and particularly fought against by Bordiga. It is perfectly known and this is why the Marxist fights against individualism, the subjective interpretation of the scientific text, the personal elaboration of real facts.

These processes call into question the scientific theory of knowledge itself and deny Marxist epistemology: it is no coincidence that *Origin and Function* represented one of the key texts on which to take sides. It is a passionate appeal to the denial of personalism in the party, therefore of the subjective elaboration of the great themes of history, the economy and the social movement. It is also no coincidence that the authors of the work themselves fell into their subjective interpretation of Marxism, from which they derived a practice far removed from their own premises.⁹⁴ The same thing happened to the detractors, who went far from applying a practice consistent with that of the non-degenerate Communist International they defended.⁹⁵

On the one hand, the logical reasoning that arose from the premises, albeit correct, of *Origin and Function* was: since the three Internationals failed due to their imperfect organic functioning and since the only organic functioning

⁹³ Thesis of Naples, Considerations on activity in unfavorable historical situations, Thesis of Milan, now in the text *In defense of the continuity of the communist program*, ed. Program Com. cit.

⁹⁴ They later founded the groups *Invariance* and *Sur le fil du temps*

⁹⁵ These are the organizations Communist Program, Communist Revolution, The Communist Party, from the name of their periodicals.

can be guaranteed by the *human Gemeinwesen*, then we demand the creation of this social community as a guarantee of organic functioning, as a form of organization that anticipates future society.⁹⁶

From the other era: since our attempt at organic functioning has proven to be an unrealizable utopia, then we return to the good old democratic centralism (naturally in a revised and corrected edition).

The first reasoning presented itself as it was, without frills and cover-up theories, therefore less dangerous and subtle: those who personified the *Gemeinwesen* theory left the organization in those years. By theorizing human communities prefiguring future society, he had his own solitary orbit to travel without doing too much damage.

The second manifested itself in all its gravity by surrounding itself with every possible theorization borrowed, appropriately revised with the language of the Left, from Stalinism and the democratic experience of the degenerate International. This second line of reasoning proved to be more consequential than the first. The "third internationalist" positions proved so tenacious that they remained latent for many years in the party until they gained the upper hand, even before Bordiga's death, and led to the destruction of the organization.

The departure from theory on activist grounds causes the greatest logical paradox: the divergence is not in principle because there is a formal and respectful adherence to the sacred texts, therefore the discussion that causes the interlocutors to diverge is based on the tactics to be applied in a given moment. But the Left itself pointed out that it is on tactics that slips before theory. Theory and action are not separable, therefore it is not possible to agree on the principles and not on the tactics to be adopted in the various phases of development existing in the different geographical areas.

But the material situation dictates that there is only one applicable tactic; therefore the final result, the logical short circuit, reaches its extreme consequences: the political struggle arises between tendencies that in effect advocate the same tactic, masking it with different theorisations.

This is the material origin, for example, of the endemic division of organizations that refer to the proletarian movement, from the official parties to the varied array of more or less known groups, despite the substantial democratic identity in intent and methods that almost unites them everyone. Division which, if not explained materialistically, i.e. also with the influence of bourgeois ideology in the processes of knowledge, is traced back to man's quarrelsomeness or to some innate defect in the human species.

⁹⁶ See the preface to *Texts on communism* ed. The old mole, Naples 1972.

This is why true Marxists insist on the use of dialectics rather than logic, on the importance of the assimilation of theory, on the denial of individualism which leads to belief in the possibility of elaboration through the personal brain alone. The brain is a material organ which, like the individual who carries it, is in relationship with the world around it and is shaped by it more than it can shape, therefore "thought" is a social biological fact, never a personal.

Bordiga insists as long as it makes sense to insist: no statutory form can guarantee that these simple rules, if we want to call them that, are assimilated and applied within the party. They need to be repeated, but not as meaningless ejaculations; we need to live them, assimilate them through work, the passing of duties from one generation to another, the dialectic of separation from those who take other paths. However, it is a huge battle against the current, given that it is not a question of people but of a dominant ideology, of a bourgeois theory of knowledge, which places the individual at the origin of facts with his free will, his soul, his mind and all.

Bordiga is not afraid of the difficulty nor does he bend in the face of the new apparent defeat that is added to the others. The party doesn't understand him, doesn't assimilate his lessons, doesn't know how to do without his protection. In 1966 he launched his last appeal: learn to do without the Big Boss, the famous name. This is a supplement to the *Naples Theses*.⁹⁷

His public activity is reduced to almost zero, even though he continues to receive comrades who keep him informed of the situation.

In 1969 he was seriously affected by thrombosis. In 1970 he agreed to give an interview for the first time. He has a preliminary conversation with the journalist who draws inspiration from it to formulate the questions. Bordiga requests that these be presented in writing and also responds in writing. The text is crystal clear. An entire life of an inflexible militant is vindicated. The journalist lists the now historic accusations of his opponents. The old revolutionary, very lucid despite his paralysis, says to his wife:

"I find the definition of sectarian pleasing and truthful in that I have never been flexible and capable of allowing myself to suggest elastic evolutions from the changing alternation of political situations and the balance of power between social classes." *When joining the revolutionary movement* , "classes are not reduced or represented as concrete categories to reproduce their dynamics and antagonistic play but rather as abstract concepts, referring to experimental social facts". *Having abandoned this method and replaced it with concretism has led to all the betrayals known to the movement* . "A doctrinal schematism firmly transmitted and retransmitted between the leaders and the base constitutes an irreplaceable feature in the life of the party".

⁹⁷ Additional theses etc., called Milan Theses

Bordiga claims for himself, as positive qualities, the accusations of sectarianism, dogmatism, abstractionism that from 1910 to 1970 were leveled against him by the non-sectarians, the non-dogmatics, the concretists who plunged the proletariat into counter-revolutionary disaster: he dialectically denies the negation of Marxism and therefore affirms it. It is his political testament, the final reaffirmation of the invariance of Marxism. A few weeks before his death, Terracini goes to visit him. He probably hadn't seen him since 1926.

"It was a strange meeting", he says , "he repeated to me the things I had already heard him say in 1922, in 1923, in 1924.

I realized that he hadn't changed his beliefs, his mentality, his way of thinking one iota."⁹⁸

3. The Science of Revolution

3.1. Three Formulas for Invariance

We have already seen that in the Milan meeting of 7 September 1952 a subtitle appears with the word invariance in quotation marks. This graphic form would be unjustified if one did not want to give a particular meaning to the text, as if it were a quote, a reference to known issues. In fact the term invariant is used in many scientific disciplines although in slightly different meanings.

A possible definition is: "Property of a chemical-physical system in equilibrium which occurs when it is not possible to vary any of the parameters that characterize it without altering this equilibrium".⁹⁹

Strictly speaking, Bordiga, in the cited text, uses the term in this first sense: it is not possible to vary a part that makes up the whole without the entire construction collapsing. This is also true over time, therefore Marxism is invariant given that it arises from factors that are always the same as long as the society divided into classes exists (historical invariance).

Another more structured definition is the following:

"Property of a law, system, body, figure, to remain unchanged even though the quantities contained in them vary by the same values. Essential property both for the formulation of rational laws (in mathematics) and for the formulation of natural laws (in physics), which would otherwise be completely impracticable".¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Umberto Terracini, *When we became communists*, Rizzoli, January 1981.

⁹⁹ Zingarelli dictionary.

¹⁰⁰ Dizionario Italiano Ragionato.

In this second definition, which includes the previous one, we have the description of an important element of topology, that is, the possibility of using the same mathematical approach to vary the shape, a variation which thus, within given and known limits, is only apparent from the theoretical point of view.

Marx addresses the problem in a sort of social topological analysis when, in the introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he talks about invariant social categories, such as possession, which remains such through the various forms of production, even if which in turn, passes into capitalist ownership.

"The simple categories represent relations or conditions which may reflect the immature concrete situation without as yet positing the more complex relation or condition which is conceptually expressed in the more concrete category; on the other hand, the same category may be retained as a subordinate relation in more developed concrete circumstances."¹⁰¹

A universal means of exchange existed before actual money appeared, metal ingots, animal skins, flesh and blood animals (pecus, small livestock, becomes pecunia), salt, etc. But money in the strict sense goes through its historical parable taking the forms of mercantile capital, industrial capital, profit, wages, share capital, financial capital, and finally a sign of abstract value recorded in the memories of computers which record and execute transactions without it moving real money.

A simple category may exist well before its developed form, but it is fully revealed only when it presents itself as invariant within said developed form, in the more complex, more mature social context. This is why today we say that Marxism reveals itself with greater power in the criticism of ultra-mature capitalism, even as the bourgeois and opportunist chorus gives it up for dead.

In the second half of the last century, mathematics discovered the invariant properties of geometric figures subjected to certain classes of transformations (rigid motions, compressions, relaxations, etc.). These properties are so closely connected to the shape of the figures examined that, surprisingly, they persist even when the figures are subjected to completely arbitrary deformations.

Without knowing it, humanity had empirically discovered the concept of invariance many centuries earlier. The great Renaissance masters who studied perspective, seeking the laws that governed the transposition of the three-dimensional world onto the two-dimensional canvas without losing the

¹⁰¹ Marx 1859; *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *The method of Political Economy*

sense of the original form, performed a mathematical operation with empirical means. When Leonardo or Dürer studied perspective trying to project the real image onto the canvas, they immediately realized that, if the centre of projection was their eye, the structure of the painting, the angles and the measurements of things altered in proportion to the relative position of the things themselves to each other, and to the observing eye. Despite these variations, even notable ones, the geometric structure of the original was not lost. A few centuries had to pass before it was discovered that there were "invariant geometric properties concerning projection or transformation groups", but above all we had to go through the bourgeois revolution which, by giving life to the Polytechnic School of Paris, laid the foundations for a scientific leap.

Bordiga lucidly records this path in the aforementioned Milan meeting, underlining that the ideological and scientific superstructure *"is not formed by the daily influx of grains of knowledge, but appears in the crack of a violent clash, and guides the class it expresses, in a substantially monolithic and stable form (...) the subsequent historical revolution"*

On the other hand, by transporting the concept of "invariance" into the social field, as well as demolishing the dualism implicit in the previous separation between different fields, Marxism introduces a dynamic that refuses the transformation of the acquired result into "revelation, myth, idealism": invariance understood dynamically is the science of a world in movement and, in the scientific field, every variation must be able to be formally described starting from known data, otherwise the entire construction collapses.

Marxism therefore remains invariant even if *"the quantities contained in it"* vary consistently, as stated in the second dictionary definition cited. In other words, invariance is not guaranteed only by the conservation of the doctrine, which would become a type of religion, but by the elaboration of its content in a theoretical body that is perfected to the limit until the next revolution. This does not mean that it is necessary to correct the theory according to the whims of contingency, an operation that would distort the theory itself, but that its content must be preserved in a shift to the higher step.

Bordiga expresses the concept of the need for conservation of the invariant and at the same time for a better arrangement of theoretical tools by calling revolutionary militants to a theoretical work that is not at all an ideological routine on Marxist bibles, as the opponents like to repeat, but real practical work, which is based on an organizational structure, on the press, on contact with the working class, on frequent work meetings that allow osmosis between center and periphery and vice versa, on the maintenance of an anti-capitalist faith reverberated above all from the press.

For Bordiga, the objection that working on "invariant" texts is reduced to a vicious circle of repetition makes no sense. No text is perfect, irrevocable and unchangeable. What is not modified is the text, of course, but the materials contained in it, like those contained in all texts, materials which *"are in continuous development and destined to reach an ever better and more complete form (...) It is only in development in this direction of work (...) that we await the quantitative expansion of our ranks and spontaneous memberships (...) which will one day make it a greater social force"*¹⁰²

The concept of invariance as described so far perfectly explains Bordiga's position, otherwise incomprehensible, as happens to most of his hasty readers. There is no contradiction at all between the established monolithic nature of the theory and its elaboration into more complex forms. There is no contradiction between the invitation to repeat and the invitation to work to bring the theory to a higher level of completeness.

There is a third possible definition of "invariant". Every scientific procedure leads man, in his effort to understand the world around him, to do more than simply observe it to obtain the data he needs to control it and predict its behaviour. Calculation, any type of calculation, must be introduced between observation and predictability. Observation of physical reality offers only a pile of data, but observation of data offers the possibility of glimpsing ordered structures. When a structure is identified, it is possible to replace a complicated sequence of events with an abbreviated formula, whose information content is identical or very close to reality.

If the formula is repeatable on all occasions on the same class of phenomena and allows us to predict events even in new conditions, we have identified a law. This procedure, which bourgeois science considered applicable only to "Newtonian" phenomena and not to complex phenomena such as fluid dynamics, economics and social dynamics, has instead been applied to increasingly complex phenomena for a couple of decades. This fact is of enormous importance in demonstrating that the bourgeoisie is forced to capitulate in the face of Marxism.

Here is a third definition that we directly relate to the aforementioned note by Bordiga written half a century earlier:

*"The word invariant describes a process common to all mathematical and, more generally, physical and natural sciences. This notion contains a priori the idea of mathematizing reality, that is, of transforming qualitative problems into quantitative ones and therefore constructing abstract formalisms and the calculation on them"*¹⁰³

¹⁰² Theses of Naples

¹⁰³ Einaudi Encyclopedia, *Invariance* entry.

Bordiga's note to the Elements of Marxist Economics of 1929 (see first chapter) serves to explain to the reader how important it is to investigate qualitative phenomena in order to obtain information for quantitative calculation, the only one that allows us to do science. The whole of human society, starting from the economy, can be reduced to quantitative data and this allows us both to understand its reality and to predict its path, therefore to demonstrate the transitory nature of the current, capitalist mode of production.

3.2. The Principle of Complete Induction: N+1

"Henry Poincaré was able to show that even in this truth lies a convention, i.e. an arbitrariness. Leibnitz had already tried to prove the theorem $2+2 = 4$. But it was only a 'verification'. All the notions of elementary arithmetic can only be demonstrated by admitting the 'principle of recurrence' as valid, that is, if given operations can be performed on n , they can be performed on $n + 1$. Furthermore, it is necessary to have defined this famous one in such a way that it is precisely the one at the principle of numeral adjectives, and when I attach it to the number n with that plus sign. When I then assign all of those to concrete entities, for given developments and calculations, I must believe that they are all identical in the real environmental conditions... perhaps it is more. It is easy to define the Divinity and the unity, which we use a thousand and a thousand times a day; and it is ultimately Pacelli who plays it safe"¹⁰⁴

Bordiga must have liked Poincaré quite a bit because he had expressed his own concepts regarding logic. For example, he had very heatedly criticized Russell who intended to demonstrate that mathematics can be reduced to logic. Logic, says Poincaré, is an abstract and formal science; it may be useful for systematizing knowledge about mathematics, but it has absolutely no influence on the development of mathematics as a science. Arithmetic and analysis are inductive sciences and therefore fall under the "principle of recurrence", also called by Poincaré the "principle of complete induction".

Since the progress of mathematics is inductive, that is, based on the completely new knowledge that it provokes in its own course, it cannot be continuous, and for this very reason, it has nothing to do with the logic that always presupposes the if - then syllogism. Only the mathematical way of reasoning allows us to make the qualitative leap from the finite to the infinite: once our brain has learned to carry out a certain operation and can repeat it several times with the same result, it can reiterate it all over again, infinitely, both materially and ideally. But then this way of reasoning can be called an axiom, while Russell's is nothing but a postulate. Axioms are demonstrative,

¹⁰⁴ Church and faith, individual and reason, class and theory, 1950.

while postulates are simple hypotheses. To prove his points, Russel interprets his postulates as axioms and this is wrong.

Poincaré believes that the possibility of conceiving a concept such as that of a "class of transformations" is an apriori faculty of the brain, the external manifestation of a certain way of functioning. Although there is a bit of Kantian language, the presence of invariants is recognized in this apriorism. We know that Poincaré was "philosophically" close to Felix Klein and we know that Klein is the father of the theory of invariants. Peano was with both of them at the Genoa Congress where the controversy against Russel developed in 1904, Bordiga was 15 years old and not yet interested in politics.

But when he began to study the problem of the development of forms of production through revolutionary "catastrophes", he must have had that type of reflection in mind. His "youthful" battle, which begins and ends in 1911-12, is already conducted based on a solid theory. The theoretical framework of the sixty-year battle will no longer change:

"For the description of communism and its advent, we do not need any other material than that prepared by Marx in 1858, a century ago, that is, the series of production methods that starts from primitive tribal communism and has already come to give us maturely developed historical essays of the modern way: market - capital - wages. We have no fraudulent rockets and missiles to add to those 'conventional weapons' of the class struggle, already well-honed in doctrine in 1858. Since then, we do not say that history has stopped, but that it has continued to descend into the sewage of the bourgeois sewer, and since then as a party, and let anyone who wants to, we know everything"¹⁰⁵

Thus begins a passage from 1958 in which we refer to Marx's series in which historical invariants appear within successive modes of production, possession, ownership, capitalist ownership, etc.

Poincaré's concept of the conventionality of symbolic notations is used for a finite series, and not for an infinite recurrence; with this it is demonstrated that the opportunist finds it more fruitful to define the Divinity than the unity, given that for his convenience he introduces transitional half-units that have nothing to do with the series.

"This central theorem of ours contains the denial of all the revisionist lies that are circulating. It is easy to state it, always with the aim not of exhausting the endless topic, but of clarifying and reinvigorating its hard-won presentation.

We will say this, to the anger of the 'subject chatterers', schematically. If there have been n social forms or modes with capitalism, in all they are $n + 1$.

¹⁰⁵ *The doctrine of modes of production valid for all human races*, in 'Il Programma Comunista', n. 3 of 1958.

Our revolution is not one of many, but is the one of tomorrow; our form is the next form."¹⁰⁶

The series of modes of production is not infinitely progressive, 1-2-3-4 etc. which would be like saying $n+1$, $n+2$, $n+3$, $n+4$ etc. This series is divided into three great eras of humanity which are: primitive communism; epoch of proprietary societies; developed communism.

Applying the invariants to the forms of production we find that the three eras represent "sets" that are superimposable only in pairs: primitive communism has in common with developed communism only the fact of not knowing property, but developed communism knows production of surplus which instead is known only from the intermediate era. On the other hand it would seem that the two first eras have nothing in common, while they are dialectically combined by Marx in that they represent, together, the entire human prehistory ("the advent of communism represents the end of human prehistory").

The formulation that interests Bordiga is therefore one that detaches the communist revolution from earlier forms. This is why the set of proprietary and exploitative forms with primitive communism, human prehistory, is represented unitarily by the symbol 'n'. That is why the '+' sign can only represent the end of the series (Peano's second axiom states that the '+' sign placed after a number produces a number). But in the course of this book we have seen that Marx includes in developed capitalism all the invariants of the previous modes of production, so n is the mode of production that determines all the others, it contains them.

*"Communism would theoretically become the $n + 2$ form, if a form appeared that was already post-capitalism and was not yet communism; communism with all those precise characters that we have dissected starting from the differential characters between the capitalism that plagues us all around and the forms it has followed. If this were the case, the historical moment to found the invariant system of revolution, as doctrine, as party, as combat, would not have arrived a century and more ago."*¹⁰⁷

Saying $n + 2$ already means, in our symbolic notation and in reality, to be anti-communist. In fact, anyone who maintains that there is the possibility of a gradual transition from one form of production to another through adjustments to previous forms is not a communist and is automatically aligned against the great historical events that prepare the qualitative leap from one type of society to another.

If we therefore deny the possibility of a non-communist $n + 1$ form it is because we deny at the same time the Stalinist aberration that the survival of

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

capital, wages and exchange according to value is socialism. Stalinist Russia was for all intents and purposes in n , and not out of it just because of the name that Moustache and all his followers gave it.

And in the face of our scheme the Trotskyists fare no better, for in the face of the Russian phenomenon they abandon n but call $n + 1$ the completely fantastic hybrid of the "degenerate workers' state", that domination of the bureaucracy which would no longer be capitalism and still isn't socialism. Peano was right and Bordiga proves it: with the scheme, the bungling lies are proven wrong, because beyond the beautiful words - the great Stalinist and Trotskyist enemies must necessarily arrive at the common formula $n + 2$ for communism. Since the revolution in the West had failed, the Russian revolution had to abort the tasks of a double revolution and limit itself to being an $n - 1$ anti-feudal revolution.

Let's take a necessary step. If we call N (upper case) the set of subsequent forms of production up to developed capitalism, we can say that the Russian revolution was one of the n -th (lower case) social formations determined by N .

Today it is easy to see this by looking at the explosive, cruel and grabber capitalism of contemporary Russia, a true by-product of N , but the older ones remember perfectly what the Soviet paradise meant for a Stalinist of the 1950s. Lacking the science that supports revolutionary faith, faith only becomes hallucination and the profession of "communism" takes on the same nature as the collective psychosis around the apparitions of the Madonna. Yet our scheme does not fear denial.

We apply the recurrence principle:

Let N be the mode of production that determines n social formations.

N is true for $n = 1$ (say England).

If it is true for England (i.e. for 1), it is true for 2 (say France).

So it's true for 2

If it is true for 2, it is also true for 3.

So it is true for 3, and so on until N involves all community forms in all areas of the world and gives rise to all n specific social forms.

The similarity exists only between N and $N + 1$; both are for the first time in history invariant at the universal scale. The transition from N to $N + 1$ is

irreversible: there can be no return to either N or N - 1. With communism, the prehistory of humanity is truly left behind forever.¹⁰⁸

The tragedy of Stalinism also involved the ranks of those revolutionaries who were not Stalinists but were unable to understand the importance of the historical transitions from one mode of production to another and looked at national revolutions underestimating their importance given that, they said, in our era only the proletarian revolution must converge all our attention. Stalinism committed the folly of tying the national revolutions of non-white peoples to the imperialistic interests of the Russian state and, in competition with American imperialism, the struggle for freedom, for democracy and against American bases became the main aim of all the "communist" parties of the world. Bordiga called indifferentism the attitude of those who underestimated the "democratic" struggle of colonial or former colonial peoples in reaction.

"The same madness is seen in denying the nature of a revolutionary transition to the national-liberal revolution of the peoples of color, to condemn them by a fictional tribunal to immobility and passivity until they can make the Stalinist leap from $n - 1$ to $n + 1$ improvising the class struggle between capitalist entrepreneurs and proletarians from nothing, or having a voluntary implementation of socialism injected from outside, which cannot be believed without joining Stalin's fold.

It is indisputable that since the appearance of the historical mode of bourgeois production in vast parts of the world, one of the characteristics of the capitalist form being the passage from the internal objective, national market (which means national independence, bourgeois national state), to the objective outside the world market, an essential term in Marx, the general movement accelerates greatly and the time gaps in the transitions between social forms in different geographical areas become smaller. The bourgeois revolution of 1848 in Europe, which had the working class as an ally, rebounded in a few months from one major capital to another, and this is a classic example of the Marxist path. Since then the bourgeoisization and industrialization of the world has proceeded at an invincible pace. So what we have always called a double revolution, and which we will now call the rapid passage from $n - 1$ to n , and then from n to $n + 1$, presents itself as a highly probable historical eventuality, as it did for Russia. But its condition was international, that is, political revolution and social transformation in countries of already mature capitalism, as a transition from capitalism to socialism.

The doctrine of the left has proven that the Russian revolution, having failed and betrayed the Western revolutions (from n to $n + 1$), had to be reduced to a pure capitalist revolution (from $n - 1$ to n). But undoubtedly the effects of Stalinist failure - rather than betrayal of people - are there. Since true communist revolutions are historically not to be expected in the West and for now not even in Russia, as there are no parties organized for the seizure of power and on the right

¹⁰⁸ We owe this development of the scheme to the Berlin comrades

revolutionary program, the other still pre-capitalist countries cannot give us double revolutions, like one could hope for Russia, in the fruitful period for Europe after the First World War".¹⁰⁹

3.3. The Reversal of Practice

"We thought we were dancing on the remains of Laplace's determinism. But chance is a completely negative, empty concept, and therefore devoid of scientific interest. Determinism, however, is an object of fascinating richness, for those who know how to examine it" - René Thom, Enough with Chance, Silence the Noise

The attentive reader who, by scrolling through Bordiga's text *Theory and Action in the Marxist Doctrine* of 1951, arrives at the concise explanation of the scheme on the succession of forms of production, will not fail to be amazed when reading those few lines. Two schemes are compared: the one that represents the gradualist conception of historical variations, with a continuous sinusoidal shape¹¹⁰, and that of the revolutionary conception which instead - represents production relations as broken phases¹¹¹. The difference between the two schemes is explained as follows:

"The first graph, or the opportunists' graph (Bernstein-type revisionists, emulators of Stalin, pseudo-Marxist revolutionary intellectuals), there is a continuous curve which at every point "allows a tangent", that is, it proceeds by imperceptible variations of intensity and direction. The second graph, in which there has been an attempt to make a simplified representation of the much deprecated "theory of catastrophes", shows that within each period there are points, or as they are known in geometry: "cusps" or "singular points". At such points the geometrical continuity, hence the historical gradualness, vanishes, the curve not only "has no tangent", but at the same time "allows all tangents" - as in the famous week which Lenin refused to let slip through his fingers."¹¹²

Commenting on this passage would require much more space than we are allowed here, but we will be satisfied with the essentials. "Catastrophe theory" today only evokes the work of René Thom which goes by that name and which in reality the author called, with a less journalistic and very significant expression, *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis*. In 1951, not even the initial stages of this work could be known, much less the name given to the theory, which followed its publication (1972).

Bordiga is therefore referring to the "much deplored" theory of revolutionary catastrophism, which dates back to Marx and Engels, but which is borrowed from Hegel, who studied from a philosophical point of view the sudden

¹⁰⁹ The doctrine etc.,

¹¹⁰ Figure 1.

¹¹¹ Figure 2.

¹¹² Theory and Action 1951

passage of forms or states in physics. The continuous change in the temperature of the water is a quantitative change that does not change the nature of the water, because it retains its non-measurable properties, that is, its qualities. But water at some point becomes ice or steam. If we stick to the appearance of the phenomenon, the qualitative change, which is a leap, a break in continuity, does not seem to have a relationship with the quantitative change. Instead, Hegel concludes, the relationship exists (today we would say that the atoms are always the same). Marx uses the argument to demonstrate the qualitative leap from money, which has existed for millennia, to Capital-value, a recent phenomenon, and directly quotes Hegel. Engels takes up the discussion again in *Anti-Dühring* (*Capital*, book I, chapter IX. *Anti-Dühring*, First section chapter. XXII).

The astonished reader has already been reassured after giving himself this first explanation, when immediately after the aside he has to think again: there is indeed a description, reduced to the bone, of Thom's catastrophe theory. As sensational as the coincidence seems, it is instead entirely 'normal': Bordiga is not a 'vate' who anticipates discovery by more than twenty years, but a user of bourgeois discoveries with a revolutionary purpose. The definition coincides because, in any case, the choice of words could not have been wider. But it also coincides with the gist of the theory because it stems from discoveries that 'were in the air' and which Thom was able to formalise. Bordiga must have known the antecedents of catastrophe theory because they date back to the first thirty years of the century and, among others, we also find Poincaré, Thom's inspiration, at the origin of the path.

The modern theory of catastrophes is interesting for us because it once again calls into question the dualism between quantitative and qualitative and ultimately fits positively into the great trend of our theory of knowledge. Furthermore, it is perfectly inserted into deterministic "systems", so it is an additional tool to combat the theories of doubt and the indeterminate. Finally, it is able to describe a very broad class of phenomena: practically any discontinuous transition that occurs in a system that is composed of two or more stable states. In a dynamic sense it explains a system that can follow more than one stable path of transformation. A somewhat crude but effective example could be that of a marble that moves on one plane (stable state) and ends up falling (catastrophe) on another. The catastrophe itself is therefore the sudden passage from one state to another or from one path to another (even an axis that breaks under an increasing weight is a catastrophe). We are beginning to understand that the question has a lot of relevance to the structure of social changes: from a stable situation, continuous and imperceptible changes lead to discontinuous rupture, to the revolutionary leap into another social form.

Living systems, which are the most reluctant to allow themselves to be formalized and are visibly non-static, can also be defined as being in "dynamic equilibrium", a phrase which at first glance seems like a contradiction. In fact, both individual organisms and societies of individuals continuously absorb and

transform energy. No state within such systems can be stable, but the set of states is extraordinarily resistant to perturbations because each state interacts with the other, canceling out the cascading effects of singular events.

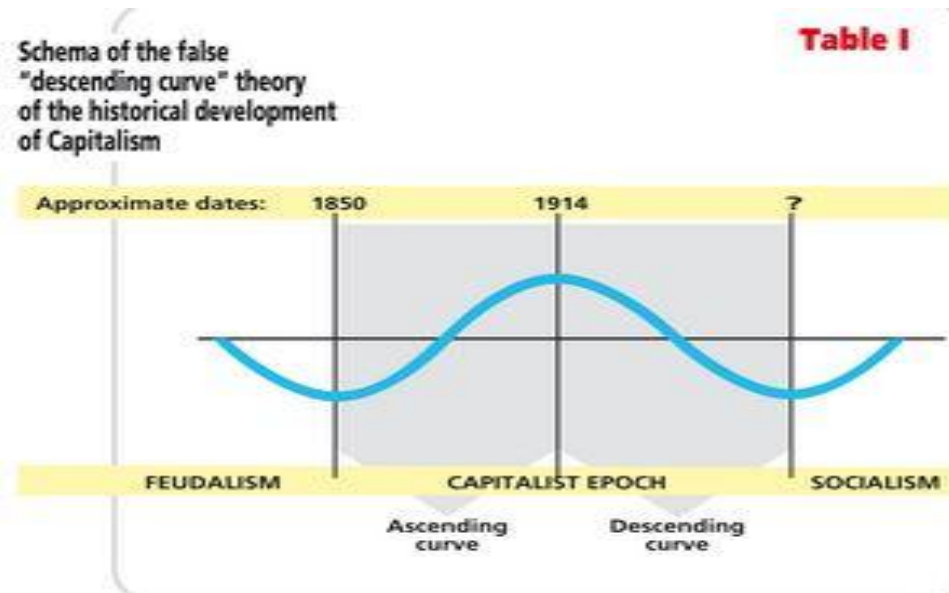


Figure 1.

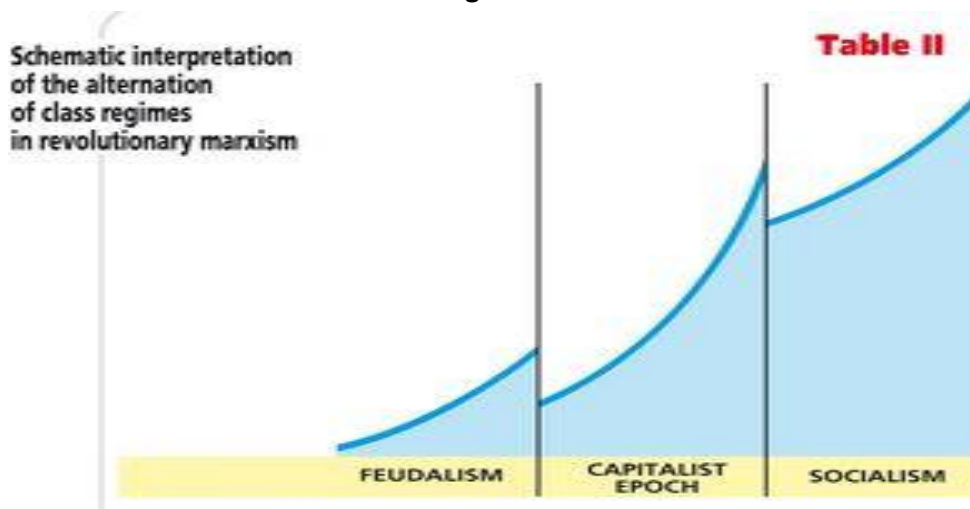


Figure 2.

The diagram of the successive forms of production (cusps, see figure 2.) created by Bordiga offers the overall vision of the successive state transitions, but the "end" vision of the process is not explained. This detailed explanation appears in

the "reversal of practice" diagram (see below), here too placed in relation to other diagrams which schematize the various opportunistic conceptions. To highlight how close Bordiga's scheme is to modern formalizations of complexity - catastrophe theory, chaos mathematics, fractals, bifurcations, etc. - we will compare two antithetical procedures, the first by Ilya Prigogine (indeterminist), the second by René Thom (determinist).

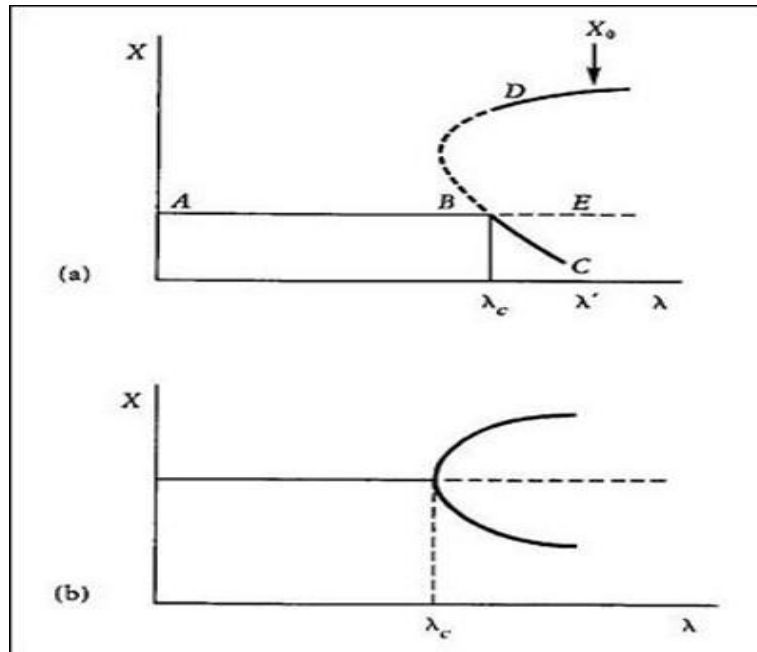


Figure 3.

In Prigogine's example in figure 3 (a), for a given value (l') of the control parameter l , the system can assume, at bifurcation B , three different stationary states: C , E , D . Two of these are stable, while one is unstable. By varying the control parameter l we can follow the path A, B, C in the figure as desired. On the contrary, as X varies, without prejudice to the control parameter l , we reach point D . In any case, the state reached depends on the previous history of the system. This type of determinism has been proven in both biological crops and chemical concentrations. Prigogine observes:

"Until now, history had normally been used for the interpretation of biological or social phenomena. That it can play the same important role in elementary chemical processes is rather surprising" - Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, The New Alliance, Chap. fifth: "Bifurcations and symmetry breaks").

But in figure 3 (b) Prigogine observes that now the bifurcation diagram, unlike the previous one, presents two symmetric and stable solutions

"Where will the system go when it reaches the bifurcation point?" you ask.
"There is a choice here between two possibilities (...) how will the system choose between right and left? We are faced with an irreducibly random element."

Every system, adds the author, faced with multiple (cascade) bifurcations in which the "choice" (and we would already have something to say about the term) between different possible futures is undecidable, represents a transition to chaos. From the mix between chaos and necessity, in the presence of small disturbances in the system, a new order can be born. This is the same conclusion reached by Jacques Monod in his famous 1970 essay *'Il caso e la necessità'*¹¹³

In René Thom's theory, the starting point for the representation of the simplest "catastrophe" looks a lot like a bifurcation diagram in which one of the axes is the usual controlling factor and the other is the general behavior of the system towards a "maximum" or a "minimum".

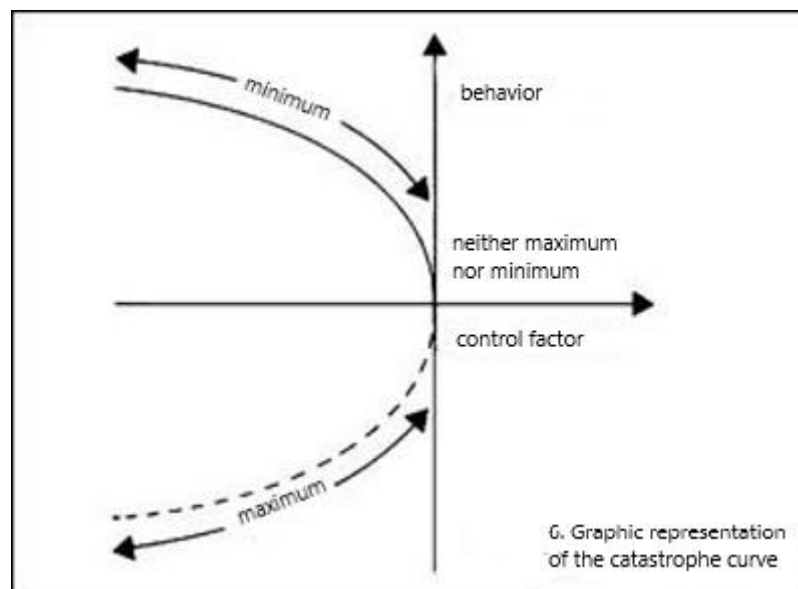


Figure 4.

The qualitative behavior of this system is very simple. For certain values of the control factor there are both maxima and minima and the system is stable with an attraction towards the minima. At a critical value of the control factor the system assumes an uncertain equilibrium, while beyond the critical value it

¹¹³ Our critique of this essay is available: "Comment Mr. Monod terrasse la dialectique", Program communiste n. 58, April 1973

becomes completely unstable. This model contains too little information to be explanatory of real facts, but it serves to understand the mechanism of the theory: everything depends on the control factor. Thom added that the indeterminists' trick is a vulgar trick, because no system presents isolated traits corresponding to a perfectly symmetrical bifurcation diagram (figure 4). Each "story" of the individual possible paths is related to the universe of adjacent stories; and the very fact that the undecidability is resolved with a statistical search of the results demonstrates that there is a statistical regularity, therefore a deterministic substrate. In the dynamics of social facts the "theory of catastrophes" as Bordiga understood it has more controlling factors (we will see this shortly), but the simple bifurcation diagram symmetric to a control factor alone is enough to make some considerations in relationship to the Marxist theory of the party.

Thom, criticizing Prigogine, did not exclude at all that the dynamics of complex systems contained singular points that lead to bifurcations; or, if the fork is impassable, to "catastrophe". Just that

"The intellectual game of the theorists of chaos from order and order from chaos, that is, of chance and necessity, consisted in mentally erasing the global dynamic environment - always deducible from a sufficiently complete examination of the basis on which the system arises develops - to the advantage of the small triggering perturbation which is followed by the collapse of the imperfect stability of the system towards a lower energy balance. The artifice lies in making people believe that the subsequent evolution, with spectacular effects, is actually created by the triggering 'fluctuation'. (...) A sufficiently complete examination of the basis on which the system develops allows us to predict a priori the possible outcomes of the bifurcation, which pre-exists the triggering fluctuation. The latter has the role of triggering the process and possibly determining, with an apparently arbitrary choice, among all the possible outcomes, further evolution certainly does not create it."

We apologize to the author for having modified the excessively technical language a little in favor of the reader. In the revolutionary dynamics formalized by Bordiga with the scheme of the reversal of practice, we have: 1) an analysis of the basis on which the system develops in which 2) four "control parameters" are identified whose dynamics lead 3) to an undecidable bifurcation (continuation of capitalism or ruin of all classes) for which all the bribes or no bribes are presented on the cusp (the week that Lenin did not want to let pass) and therefore 4) the practice is reversed because the party, product of history, it becomes a subjective factor, representing the "will".

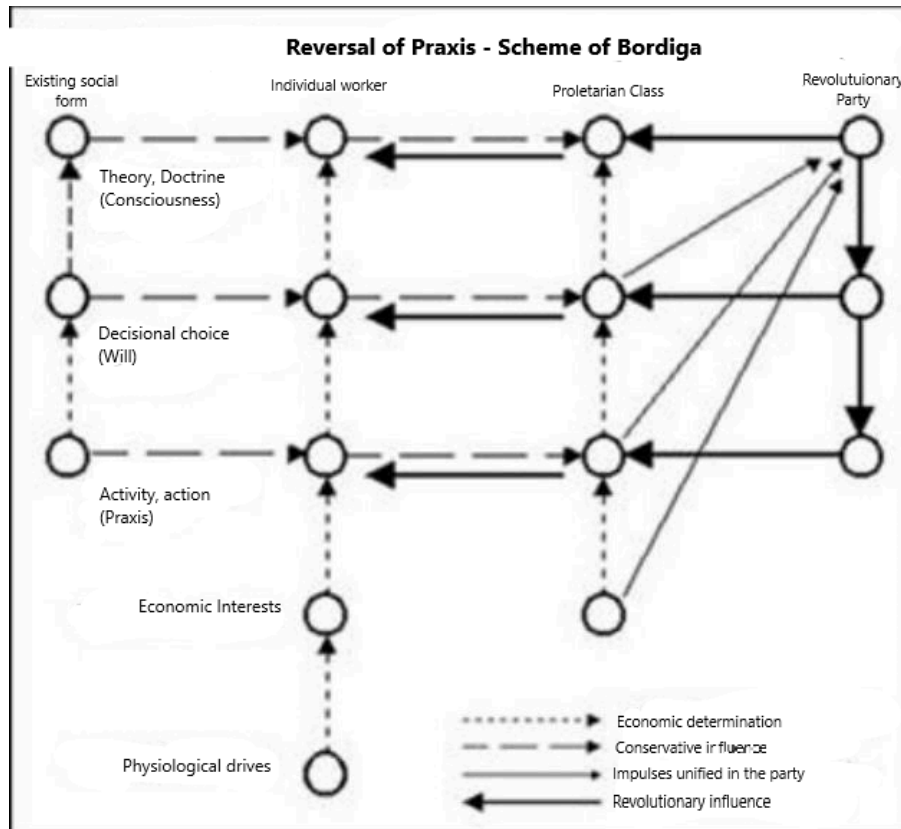


Figure 5.

In Bordiga's catastrophe theory the four control parameters (see figure 5) are represented in a two-dimensional scheme, while in Thom's theory they would be represented in what is called a "butterfly catastrophe graph" that takes place in a space multi-dimensional. Bordiga's scheme demonstrates that, near the bifurcation, in the controversy between Prigogine and Thom, Thom was right: the environment, the universe of determinations from which no social atom can escape, being polarized by the convergence of interests that no longer oppose individuals but entire blocks of society, classes, leads the party instrument to choose. And here the term no longer has that sense of "free will" that Prigogine assigns to dynamic phenomena. We don't know if Thom was anti-communist like all his colleagues dedicated to science paid for by bourgeois universities, but the social brain has the upper hand over the individual brain of the researcher, and this is Bordiga's own lasting teaching. Moreover, Thom himself recorded the phenomenon in almost the same words as Bordiga:

"Many scientific findings are undoubtedly true, but their interest is weak, almost zero. The real problem is to trace the source of the interest. In some cases it is a local sociological source: a result is interesting simply because the financier of the research has presented the scientist with a problem that he has every interest in solving, if only to advance his career".

But there are some cases in which research falls within the need for global knowledge, which is the true purpose, what is needed to "decipher the world, make it intelligible"; then the interest is no longer venal, because "revealing an underlying structure that makes phenomena intelligible" means adopting that method of abstraction which, deduced from Hegel, Marx powerfully borrowed and overturned, and which Bordiga claims in every one of his meetings, in all his writings on the problems of knowledge. Replacing a complex visible with a simple (abstract) invisible is not a problem of interpreting reality, but of revealing reality.

The task of revealing the underlying structure of capitalist society, which contains within itself all the invariants of previous societies, would seem to be as impossible a task as the task of ordering into some scheme the infinity of movements and changes inherent in the entire world that surrounds us. Bordiga read Leibnitz and his "law of continuity" (1687) which requires a certain order in the questions in order to have an order in the answers; he certainly studied the results of Poincaré's research and followed the debate on the stability of the solar system (e.g. Duhem, 1914), from which it can be deduced that the problem of perturbations that lead to "catastrophes" is ultimately the problem of validity of determinism.

The crucial question to be answered is: if a dynamic system undergoes continuous perturbations and mathematically tends to expand them until small initial variations produce large final changes, how come, practically, most forms (including capitalism) reveal an unsuspected robustness compared to small disturbances? To answer in "catastrophist" language we will say: there is a structural stability that is insensitive to individual critical elements, but at the same time it is called into question by perturbations which, in completely specific phases, can lead to discontinuous breakages. The understanding of phenomena is made possible by their reduction through abstraction processes.

The catastrophe theory has provoked support and criticism, but it has demonstrated one thing: the once-desperate feat of explaining the infinite number of forms and behaviours proves feasible since, by subjecting these forms and behaviours to certain constraints, a finite number of types are eventually found, according to Thom and his pupils only seven.

Bordiga's scheme also explains the genesis of bourgeois theories that advance parallel to Marxism and lag behind it. The determinations that arise from the elementary physiological drives of the individual towards the conscious activity of the organization are reversed: the conscious activity of the organization determines the behavior of the classes and the action of individuals, while the revolutionary influence neutralizes the conservative influence and allows for social leaps. Before this leap occurs, it is inevitable that the real needs

of production and research will produce many of these bourgeois ideological capitulations to Marxism.

Since every catastrophe scheme (of the seven possible types) must respond to the "Leibniz constraint" mentioned above, research into discontinuity in dynamic systems cannot assume discontinuity itself as a given of the dynamics. Researchers who have worked on the potential richness of Thom's theory have observed that the concept of "explanation" implicit in the theory is also relevant from the point of view of mathematical technique because it places it in the great classical trend of research on the "continuum". If this interpretation is correct, and if Bordiga had lived long enough to know about it, he would have liked all this very much. In fact, he wrote in 1956 about the theory of relativity (underlining in the text):

"Having substituted local time for universal time, one can rewrite mechanics with new formulae, but on the same principles as Galileo, Newton, d'Alembert, with the same canonical equations... [Einstein] leaves Descartes' and Leibniz's hypothesis firm, i.e. everything is measured with gradually varying quantities, therefore continuous, thus applying infinitesimal calculus and coordinate systems [even if] he nevertheless asks mathematics for new apparatuses"¹¹⁴

This claim for a "science of the continuum" is important because it contributes to bringing science closer to the unitary conception of the universe that is typical of Marxism. Einstein, adds Bordiga, writes "in the end, the monistic and materialistic identity between matter and thought". As would anyone who found themselves marching on the same path as us.

The "catastrophic" Marxist theoretical conception expressed by the scheme of the reversal of practice drawn by Bordiga unites in a dialectical relationship the "substrate", that is, the material economic environment which is the arena of human relations, with the effects of ideology and "thought". The action of the political party, which is a superstructure, becomes, at the point of catastrophe, a material force that causes a qualitative change of "state".

"The dialectical relationship lies in the fact that both the revolutionary party is a conscious and voluntary factor of events, as it is also a result of them and of the conflict they contain between ancient forms of production and new productive forces. This theoretical and activity of the party would, however, collapse if its material ties were severed with the contribution of the social environment, of the primordial, material and physical class struggle"¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Filo: Relativity and Determinism 1955

¹¹⁵ Theory and Action in the Marxist Doctrine 1951

In the light of these quotes, a famous and peremptory statement by Bordiga becomes clearer: revolutions and parties are not created, they are directed (in "Party and class action", Rassegna Comunista, 1921).

A scientific communicator who wrote an essay on the theory of catastrophes, while not paying attention to the dialectical relationship between the party and the environment which makes it a "product and factor of history", is struck by Lenin's attitude in October, when presented "the week not to let pass". This author records in his own way, somewhat naively, the subversive force of the reversal of practice carried out by the Bolshevik Party:

*"During the events leading up to the Russian Revolution, Lenin is said to have been very attentive to the timeliness of the Bolsheviks' moves to power. Under the right circumstances, he said, a small 'push' will be enough to bring about a transition that at another time would require a much greater effort"*¹¹⁶

We started from a consideration by Bordiga on the same fact: it is interesting to find it in a book on the mathematical theory of catastrophes.

4. Language

Rigor is expressed in Bordiga's writings with a language that needs to be commented on. Those who tried to translate their Italian into another language immediately found themselves struggling with sometimes insurmountable difficulties and had to resort to frequent periphrases. This is not only due to the use of a "personal" way of expressing oneself, but to the current language which is shaped by the needs of capitalism and inhibits the possibility of expressing oneself in fields that are not capitalist.

In Factors of Race and Nation Bordiga quotes Marx who in the German Ideology says:

"Language is the immediate actuality of thought. Just as philosophers have given thought an independent existence, so they were bound to make language into an independent realm.

(...)

*neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, that they are only manifestations of actual life."*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ A. Woodstock and M. Davis, The theory of catastrophes

¹¹⁷ Marx.; German Ideology; On Language & Idealism

This means that real life cannot for now have words useful for describing the future society, and the language that prefigures its advent through the revolution must somehow "make do".

From a linguistic point of view (communication, information, signs) we know what the way to overcome the insufficiencies of the medium itself could be: the elaboration of the form. There is no need here to introduce elements of the age-old discussion on content-form, but it is certain that the capitalist language has not yet resolved from the aesthetic point of view of communication the use of words that refer to the marvelous modern technology, its applications and the social-productive context. Russian futurism died with the revolution, Italian futurism died in fascism and nothing followed them. The extreme phase of capitalism has remained without the possibility of expression and the new society does not yet have its language.

Bordiga's language has nothing to do with "literature" and even less with futurism. It is rather an instrument burdened by external limits that it cannot tolerate, and it shows. Sometimes it has a chaotic, uncontrolled syntax, with matryoshka engravings and endless sentences. Sometimes each sentence is full of meaning like an algorithm that compresses a complex natural phenomenon into itself. Compression into algorithms is the essence of scientific progress, but compression into linguistic algorithms is also the essence of poetry, the real one.

There are some articles so shabby that to publish them it is necessary to carry out restoration work on what the typographical lead has left on the terrible paper of the struggle newspapers. They are "difficult", as some complain, but they are always very clear in their overall meaning. There are other texts that have a compelling, harmonious rhythm, in short, they are perfect. In both cases they were addressing proletarians, not literary magazines.

The revolutionary linguistic tool in Bordiga makes use, willingly or not, of expedients to go beyond the limits of simple description and interpretation and arrive at scientific explanation. To give a sense of dynamics and becoming, archaisms, dialect entries, invented words, technicalities, onomatopoeias, deformations of all kinds are used (parascientific forms, suffixals and prefixoids, substantivations and desubstantivations, adjectival periphrases, puns...); in short, one could list everything that a ponderous grammar contains.

Let's take any text, for example some sentences from a chapter of the Dialogue with the Dead of 1956. There was the XX Congress of the CPSU in Moscow, Khrushchev denounces the cult of personality; the so-called de-Stalinization begins by the Stalinists who do not for this reason become something other than what they were. History is rewritten once again. The first time was when Stalinism exterminated the old Bolshevik guard. Twice in one generation, that's too much. The event cannot be described as a news story,

because either it is trivialized with the story or it is dramatized with moral indignation. The historical tragedy of the proletariat betrayed by such a double about-face (betrayal of the betrayal of principles) can only be addressed by exaggerating the linguistic form.

"Several times we will have to reduce the positions of the Moscow movement to the denial, as an absolute counter-facade, of the cornerstones of communism (..) All the 'Stalin material' is suddenly removed from the way, and raked back from all the outlets of the periphery. In its place the literature of this twentieth congress is suddenly overturned, line by line, even more disconnected, in its filiation from multiple fathers, than the 'scientific' and truly pitiful parts of mama's boy Stalin (...) trash of the century, the scribe would say; the greatest trash in history, we would say".

The bureaucratic 'Stalin material', as if it were a ministry dossier, is withdrawn from the 'suburban outlets' among which, in Italy, are the Botteghe Oscure branches, named after the street where the Italian CP has its headquarters, on which irony is easy to be found. The withdrawn paper is worse than second-rate because it is already the child of degenerate things. On the other hand, at least Stalin-mammone (capitalist) produced unitedly, while the new verb is born through a 'democratic congressional debate'. The simple gloss is annoying, while the original is perfectly enjoyable, although some information is lost in the process if the reader is not aware of the references.

"Modern bourgeois critical thought, which still does not clear despite the terrible results on all fronts, rejected Being, Grace, and the investiture of infallibility, but claimed to replace it with a control of human action which was no different, that is, he took men by the head, raved about the printing press, about literacy and about the book in large circulation and - alas for him - about the introduction of the newspapers; about the torch-master against the extinguisher priest whoever translates this grip of the citizen-man by the head into a real grip for the dialectician, even if scurrilous, contrary (...) We consult in the face (of the wise men of inexhaustible resources and maneuvers) crumpled and unattainable pamphlets that give us they have been driving for about a century: those gentlemen give an example of their return to Marxism, they change from one day to the next, at a whistle from the countermaster, all the printed paraphernalia, in historical, economic, political, philosophical criticism, certain that they will change like this in their own way the face of the world. Precisely because we have certainly not learned to avoid the cult of personality today, we will always insist that it seems like Stalin's work; we will not quote a cent higher than this the launched Florilegio of congressional nonsense, which today is overflowing".

Bordiga goes on like this for pages and pages, without stylistic tiredness, without giving up for a moment on being supported by the form where the stylistic synthesis compresses half a page of ordinary text into a sentence.

Try translating any of Bordiga's texts into "non-fiction" Italian, from the Dialogues to the best articles of Sul filo del tempo, and you will see first-hand the loss of meaning you obtain. This inevitably happened in translations. Except in rare cases, the translations were not done by professionals, but by comrades who patiently racked their brains against obstacles that were insurmountable for them. Bordiga claims to have done the experiment with classmates who found his articles "difficult": "Sometimes I took one of my articles and told young classmates to translate it into a more accessible language: the experiment was always disastrous even if it of intelligent and cultured editors: sometimes they made me say the exact opposite".¹¹⁸

The reason is understandable. Sometimes it seems that the content of the text is not as deep as it seems at first glance. On the contrary, sometimes it seems that a text is flowing while it turns out to be ultra-condensed in content. Bordiga's text is never "explanatory". It affects the listener, if he has the patience to tune in, and captures his attention by setting in motion his emotions and his knowledge. The fact is explained in the same letter:

"Let's not repeat the nonsense that the workers can't understand. It doesn't matter. You have no experience with intellectuals and you don't know enough how empty, stupid, vile and difficult they are to move an inch from the dominant prejudices. For forty years I have learned thoroughly the more easily a working-class audience grasps theses which are bold, radical and in contradiction to traditional ideas, whereas right-thinking people perhaps with several degrees respond by uttering gigantic and pitiful nonsense. I have therefore put aside forever the worry that the workers will not understand. Precisely because they are free from the scholastic path and have a method that relies more on instinct than reasoning, they bring themselves to the class level and act accordingly".

Bordiga's text appeals more to instinct than to reasoning, or rather, first to instinct and then to reasoning; it is a text that moves only those who already have within themselves the premises to understand and digest it. Those who are not already close find him unfriendly and difficult, incomprehensible. One finds it increasingly richer by frequenting it a lot, and in this it proves to be very close to what Umberto Eco calls "open work", a communication mechanism that moves the psychological passivity of those who receive the message, forcing them to participate, that is, to formulate the message itself. This is why intellectuals "don't understand" while a working-class audience understands very well. We remember that Bordiga was a formidable orator capable of captivating the audience of a rally even with topics that were not suitable for a rally, as some police reports recall in the years before the formation of the PCd'I.

For these reasons we read Bordiga with the pleasure with which we read the "classics". Behind his language, which appears twisted and baroque, there is

¹¹⁸ Lettera a Salvador del 23 nov. 1952.

a rigor formulated through poetry. That doesn't sound like an exaggeration. On the solid and unsurpassed linguistic contribution of the revolutionary bourgeoisie (with Cattaneo and De Sanctis mentioned at the beginning of the volume), an invented language is superimposed and inlaid which has no equivalent in today's literature, flat, inexpressive, banal. Only in the works of another engineer, builder of power plants and great writer, can we find a language similar in many ways: Carlo Emilio Gadda.

"The design engineer (...) does not see himself, he sees the work, he sees 'the thing that will have to be'. The thread of the act, of acts, which descends from the distaff of thought. He sees the task in front of him , 'the problem to be solved', the discipline of execution (...) The good engineer, like the good technician and the good worker, has an almost instinctive sense of what is logical or otherwise called rational. His calm meditation he makes comparisons, adjustments that are very close to those of calculation. He loves and wants what is well thought out and perfect, he prepares the 'means', that is, the best instrument to reach the end".¹¹⁹

5. Chronology

1889 Amadeo Bordiga was born in Resina (Naples) on 13 June.

1907 He begins to frequent the Neapolitan socialist environment.

1910 He joins the Italian Socialist Party.

1911 Carries out activities against the Libyan war.

1912 He founded the Carlo Marx Club in Naples, intending to combat the ultra-reformist tendencies and the compromise politics of the southern sections of the Socialist Party, the infiltration of Freemasonry, and the wordy and inconclusive trade unionism. In recent years he has been waging an intense battle against militarism and the war in Libya, writing many defeatist articles, within the limits of censorship of that time, for the newspaper *L'Avanguardia* of which he has since become director. At the Reggio Emilia Congress of the Socialist Party, he is leading the current of young revolutionaries, which takes the form of the Intransigent Revolutionary Fraction.

1913 in Portici he founded the propaganda newspaper *Il Lavoro*, while the fortnightly *La Voce* of Castellammare di Stabia became the spokesperson for the Carlo Marx Club by publishing its articles.

¹¹⁹ Carlo Emilio Gadda, 1893-1973. The passage cited is taken from *Letter to Leonardo Sinisgalli* , in *Il tempo e le opere* , Adelphi 1982.

1914 He led a harsh opposition to the war from the columns of *Il Socialista*, rejecting the slogan "neither join nor sabotage" adopted by the PSI and immediately clashes with the party apparatus. Interventionists leave the organization.

1916 He is called to arms but manages to avoid the front. His activity is severely limited by police control.

1917 With the victory of the October Revolution, he is a very active organizer of the groups who feel the need to change the party to make it a true revolutionary body. He works for the isolation of the reformists.

1918 In June he marries Ortensia De Meo, a socialist militant already present at the foundation of the Carlo Marx Club and with whom he will have two children. In December he founded *Il Soviet*, a periodical which would soon become the vital centre of the controversy with the reformists and then the organ of the battle for the new party already existing in fact in a current which, around the newspaper, is something more than a fraction between the others. In the same year, at the XV Congress of the PSI, he supported the need to support Lenin's theses on the international revolution.

1919 Within the PSI he promoted the Abstentionist Communist Fraction.

1920 Participates in the II Congress of the Communist International. Contributes to the definition of the "21 points of membership" then presented by Lenin and intervenes on the need not to involve the party's forces in electoral and parliamentary disputes, now not only useless but also harmful, in the West, to revolutionary purposes. Towards the middle of October, he presented the *Manifesto of the Communist Fraction* at the Milan Conference of the Fraction, later also called the "pure communists". Gramsci and Terracini also participate in the discussion on the possible separation from the PSI, representing the Turin socialists. He begins his editorial collaboration with *Il Comunista* which comes out in November. Many articles are clearly preparatory to a split from the PSI. On 29 November he presented the motion of the Communist Fraction at the National Conference in Imola calling for "a clean break" with social democracy.

1921 At the PSI National Congress in Livorno in January, he denounced the impossibility of coexistence between revolutionary forces, reformism and maximalism with a definitive speech. The Communist delegation split off and, in another place, founded the Communist Party of Italy, a section of the International. He moved to Milan in February as the 'executive member' of the new party, which decided to set up its leadership in that city. He intensified his activity in the various areas of intervention of the new party. His extraordinary physical capacity for work is recalled by both his old comrades and police reports. During this period he made frequent trips to the new party sections, wrote regularly in four periodicals: *Il Soviet*, *Il Comunista* of which he became

director, *L'Ordine Nuovo* which became the party organ, and *Rassegna Comunista* which was its theoretical journal. Under his direction, the new party immediately organised both the trade union network and the illegal military network, while in discipline to the International, it had to set aside abstentionism and participate in elections. On the level of principles and tactics, he began to write articles of theoretical and practical orientation from which it is clear that already at the beginning of 1921 he identified, unlike the vast majority of comrades, the existence of not indifferent problems with the International. He did not attend the 3rd Congress of the CI, burdened as he was with internal organisational tasks. A delegation led by Terracini was sent, who, in his speech, badly defended the Left's positions on the question of the workers' united front. Lenin harshly criticised the positions expressed by Terracini and coined the famous phrase 'extremism, an infantile disease of communism'. A misunderstanding was born about the Italian Left, which was then lumped together with other 'lefts' with which it had nothing to do. The articles he wrote in 1921 clarified all the divergences, not yet explicit (i.e. not yet the subject of direct polemics), between the leadership of the PCd'I and the International: the problem of revolution in the West; the tactics of action with the other political forces (Single Front); the assessment of fascism; the nature of the International (i.e. World Communist Party or federation of national communist parties). In December he participated as an envoy of the International at the Marseilles Congress of the French Communist Party. On that occasion he reaffirmed questions of principle touching on all the problems on which the International and its member parties were beginning to depart from the positions previously expressed, that is, from the theoretical elaboration whose culmination had been reached with the 2nd Congress of the CI.

1922 March. As the discussion widens within the PCd'I and between its governing bodies and the International, on the occasion of the II Congress of the party, Bordiga presents with Terracini the theses on tactics, known as the *Theses of Rome*, to give a theoretical basis for the discussion itself. In May he moved to Rome, taking over the direction of *Il Comunista*. In September, his important article on *the relationships between social and political forces in Italy*¹²⁰ which analyzes the nature of fascism, was published in *Rassegna Comunista*, unfortunately unfinished. Shortly afterwards Mussolini carried out his anomalous "coup d'état". Less than two weeks after the fascist March on Rome, the IV Congress of the Comintern opens (from 5 November to 5 December) in which he presents the report on the Italian situation, on the work of the PCd'I between the two Congresses, on the project of party action program; presents the thesis project on the tactics of the International; holds a specific report on fascism; expresses reservations about the proposed merger between the communist party and the socialist party.

¹²⁰ In *Rassegna Comunista*, 30 september and 31 october 1922.

1923 The battle of "centrism" (as the fraction loyal to the International was called) against the Left takes place within the year. In the spring he was arrested by the police and indicted for "plotting against the state". In June the arrested leaders were replaced as party leaders. The organizational and political responsibility passes to Togliatti and Terracini, who will remain faithful to the line of the Left until the end of the year. After the trial and his release, he was invited by the International to resume his place in the party's Executive Committee, but he refused (22 December) explaining that there was incompatibility between his positions and those of the Comintern: a management commitment would force him to adhere to a discipline that supports positions that he does not have and this would lead to a false attitude towards the organization.

1924 In January he published the monthly magazine *Prometeo* in Naples. The intent is to give a voice to the Left. In May, the Como Conference takes place in which the party declares itself with an overwhelming majority in favour of the theses of the Left. Only seven issues of *Prometeo* were published because in the summer the new party headquarters, in agreement with the Comintern, crushed the initiative. In the same period, Bordiga refused to stand as a candidate in the elections. He participates in the V Congress of the Comintern and presents his theses on tactics, warning against the right-wing revisionism that threatens the Russian party. The theses are again rejected. In the subsequent clandestine Congress in Naples, he clashed with the new leaders aligned with the positions of the Comintern. Gramsci, seeing that despite everything the party is still with Bordiga, prevents the vote on their respective theses.

1925 Centrism unleashes open struggle against the Left. Togliatti is for definitive action against Bordiga, but Gramsci is afraid of the consequences within the party. Bordiga wrote an article in defence of Trotsky (February), later used by centrists to demonstrate his "Trotskyism". He joins the Committee of Understanding, made up of a small number of Left militants to respond unitedly to the Centre's attacks. He dissolves this committee after a few months.

1926 From 21 to 26 January he takes part in the III Congress of the PCd'I in Lyon (clandestine). With a typically electoral expedient, the centre secures the votes of the absentees of the Left, unable to reach the Congress. The following month the work of the VI enlarged Executive of the International began in Moscow. On both occasions, Bordiga attempts a final passionate defence of the Marxist theses and a consequent tactic. In a meeting on the sidelines of the VI Executive, he asks Stalin if Russian issues are not taking precedence over international issues. Stalin responds indignantly. After the Moscow meeting, there was no sign of his public political activity. The police reported his frequent movements, probably in an attempt to maintain contact with his old comrades on the Left. On November 22 he was sentenced without trial to three years of confinement and was immediately arrested while the fascists devastated his house. He was taken first to Ustica and then to Ponza, islands measuring 7-8

square kilometres, where he remained until 1929. During his imprisonment he organized a school for prisoners and regularly held lessons on scientific subjects with Gramsci.

1930 He is expelled from the party on charges of "Trotskyist" factional activity. Upon returning from confinement he dedicated himself to the profession of engineer without dealing with political issues anymore. Moreover, he would be completely unable to do so because the police monitor him 24 hours a day with six officials taking turns. In the police archives, there remains a trace of this control which lasted until 1943, when the war ended in Naples following the Anglo-American landings. In this period he does not attempt contact with the Fraction abroad¹²¹, does not try to expatriate as many communists do, does not carry out any illegal activity, as the national police authorities constantly suspect, always denied by the local ones.

1943 In northern Italy, still occupied by the German army, some groups of the Left met clandestinely to create a new communist party.

1944 Some sections already exist with their newspaper, *Prometeo*, of which a few illegal numbers are published. It does not appear that Bordiga has contact with them. In the clandestine newspaper *Il proletario* the article 'A programmatic declaration' was published which many mistakenly attributed to him.

1945 By spring he draws up the *Political Platform of the Internationalist Communist Party*¹²², but the party doesn't actually exist. Even after the war, when many former militants will give shape to the organization, it will be a very different party from what Bordiga intended. These are heterogeneous elements which are unable to understand the true nature of the differences with the PCI which in the meantime is celebrating the partisan "liberation". Many sections are numerous but without a political program.¹²³ They will disperse as quickly as they formed. Bordiga did not participate in the Turin Conference (which took place from 28 to 31 December 1945 and which, for the participants, was the founding act of the Internationalist Communist Party).

1948 He took part neither in the First Congress (6 May) nor in the active life of the party, provoking criticism from many old comrades. His collaboration was limited to work published in the new journal *Prometeo* under the pseudonyms Alfa and A. Orso. Anonymous articles of his appear in the party

¹²¹ The Communists of the Left reorganized abroad around the French-language periodical *Bilan*

¹²² Now in: *The Assault of Revisionist Doubt on the Foundations of Marxist Revolutionary Theory*, ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Turin, November 1992.

¹²³ The organization was made up of 72 sections and 13 provincial federations. It was based on the old democratic centralism, with internal elections, voting on opposing theories, etc. The PCI, ultra-Stalinist until the 1960s, is now called PDS (democratic party of the left) after having followed the social democratic and frontist parable to the end.

organ Battaglia Comunista.¹²⁴ There is no official justification for this on his part, but his later writings and the events to which they refer speak clearly: there was no suitable ground for founding a new party. Lenin's work had to be taken up again and the theoretical discourse that could represent the programme of the future party had to be re-established.

1951 He writes the *characteristic theses of the party*¹²⁵, which represent the bases for adhering to the Marxist program, bases for the delimitation of the revolutionary organisation. To tell the truth, the "party" had already spontaneously purged itself of many elements that had nothing to do with the Left, but within it non-Marxist, activist, unrealistic, etc. positions persisted. The internal functioning was far from organic and many theoretical issues were not resolved at all, such as the trade union question, the question of Russia, the question of wars and the liberation struggles of colored peoples.

1952 Precisely for the above reasons the party splits in two. The new Internationalist Communist Party was born around Bordiga with a new newspaper, *Il Programma Comunista*; Democratic centralism, internal voting, statutes and hierarchical positions are abandoned. We try to function according to an organic approach that had never been adopted before. From this moment Bordiga carried out an enormous amount of theoretical work. A team is formed around him jokingly called "the negroes", from the name given by Alexander Dumas to his collaborators in the mass production of his novels. The work is decided during the frequent "general" meetings in the margins of which the "blacks" organize the themes and research. Once planned, the work is carried out by the whole party and channelled back towards the "centre" which reverberates the results towards all members through the press and local meetings.

1964-65 The party, which in the meantime had become a small international reality with groups abroad, experienced another serious crisis. A large number of comrades abandoned the organization with positions more or less similar to those that already caused the break in 1952. Bordiga tries to clarify once again what is meant by organic centralism with the publication of material on the party and the issues in discussion. This, instead of preventing the split, hastened it. Shortly afterwards the theses on the party come out.¹²⁶

1966 In April he publishes the *Supplementary Theses*¹²⁷ to specify the organic working method, to point out some lessons on historical opportunism

¹²⁴ This is the series of 136 articles entitled *On the thread of time* and continued in the new party organ *The communist program* until 1955.

¹²⁵ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bordiga/works/1951/charthes.htm>

¹²⁶ Considerations on the organic activity of the party when the general situation is historically unfavourable, January 1965; Thesis on the historical task, action and structure of the world communist party, according to the positions that have formed the historical heritage of the communist left for over half a century, July 1965.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

and to stigmatize personalism within the party. In the same year his last writings appeared in the newspaper, with the only exception of a short article in 1968 on students.¹²⁸

1968 He retires ill, to his house in Formia.

1969 He suffers a cerebral stroke from which he recovers with difficulty and only partially.

1970 A few weeks before his death, in derogation of his decision which he adhered to until the last moment, he writes the answers to an interview.¹²⁹

He dies in July.

6. Essential Bibliography

A. Writings by Bordiga and the Communist Left

This list includes volumes that also contain some writings not by Bordiga. They are included in various publications of the *Notebooks* due to their relevance to the topic of the collection or because they are referred to directly by Bordiga in his writings. For example, the first volume of the *History of the Left* is almost entirely written by Bordiga, while the second, third and fourth, by Bruno Maffi, constitute a continuation of the work and cannot be divided from it.

Even the text *Subsequent Forms of Production in Marxist Theory* is not by Bordiga but by Roger Dangeville. It was developed in France and the Italian translation presented here is revised and expanded compared to the one that appeared in instalments in the fortnightly *Il programma Comunista*. We included it in the list because it is part of the collective work of the party and reflects an approach long desired by Bordiga.

The text *Origin and Function of the Party Form*, by Jacques Camatte, was drafted by the first French groups of the party and never completed. It appears here because it is claimed by Bordiga in the preparatory work for the theses on the organization of the party with which he is paired.

The text *The Crisis of 1926 in the Party and in the International*, by Bruno Maffi, opens with Bordiga's famous letter to Korsch and was included in the bibliography because it is important for the knowledge of the crucial period of the defeat of the Left and the world revolution.

¹²⁸ Elementary note on students and authentic left-wing Marxism, in *Il Programma Comunista* n. 8 of 1968.

¹²⁹ An interview with Amadeo Bordiga, edited by Edek Osser, in *Storia Contemporanea* n. 3, september 1973.

The volume *Church and Faith, individual and Reason, class and Theory* contains the article *Christianity and Marxism* by Ludovico Tarsia, explicitly referred to by Bordiga in an article from the series "On the Thread of Time". In all the volumes listed, there are a few other additions by anonymous party militants.

This bibliography refers to more or less available material, while as regards that which has never been republished, especially from the years preceding the Second World War, it is necessary to go back to the public and private collections of the newspapers of the time.

Since May 2000, the *Quaderni Internazionalisti* have changed their name and become *Quaderni di n+1*.

AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume primo

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AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume secondo

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Pagg. 449. Ed. Graphos, Genova 1998.

AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume terzo

Lotte sociali e prospettive rivoluzionarie del dopoguerra 1918-1919

Pagg. 434. Ed. Fondazione Amadeo Bordiga, Formia 2010.

AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume quarto

La Frazione comunista del PSI e la Terza Internazionale 1920-1921

Pagg. 505. Ed. Fondazione Amadeo Bordiga, Formia 2011.

AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume quinto

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Pagg. 487. Ed. Fondazione Amadeo Bordiga, Formia 2014.

AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume sesto

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AMADEO BORDIGA SCRITTI 1911-1926, volume settimo

Le "Tesi di Roma" e i contrasti con l'Internazionale Comunista 1922

A cura di Luigi Gerosa. Pagg. 653. Ed. Fondazione Amadeo Bordiga, Formia 2017.

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Pagg. 415. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1964.

STORIA DELLA SINISTRA, volume secondo, 1919-1920.

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Pagg. 740. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1972.

STORIA DELLA SINISTRA, volume terzo, 1920-1921

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Pagg. 517. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1986.

STORIA DELLA SINISTRA, volume quarto, 1921-1922

Il Partito Comunista d'Italia e i rapporti con L'Internazionale Comunista.

Pagg. 490. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1995.

STORIA DELLA SINISTRA, volume quinto, 1922-1923

Dal maggio 1922 al febbraio 1923.

Pagg. 693. Ed. il programma comunista, Milano 2017.

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Rapporto sulla lotta contro la reazione fascista, sulla difesa delle organizzazioni operaie, sui rapporti con il Partito Socialista e gli Arditi del Popolo, sulla tattica del Fronte Unico e del Governo Operaio.

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- - Riunione di Milano, settembre 1952: I. la "invarianza" storica del marxismo. II Falsa risorsa dell'attivismo.
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Numero doppio della rivista n+1 – giugno-settembre 2004

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PARTITO RIVOLUZIONARIO E AZIONE ECONOMICA

- - Riformismo sindacale (1921).
- - Il fronte unico (1921).
- - Marxismo e questione sindacale (1949).
- - Corporativismo e socialismo (1949).
- - Le scissioni sindacali in Italia (1949).
- - Marxismo e miseria (1950).
- - Lotta di classe e "offensive padronali" (1950).
- - Albione e la vendetta dei numi (1951).
- - Partito rivoluzionario e azione economica (1952).
- - Il partito di fronte alla "questione sindacale" (1972).

Pagg. 90. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

DALL'ECONOMIA CAPITALISTICA AL COMUNISMO

- - Dall'economia capitalistica al comunismo (Conferenza tenuta a Milano sulla trasformazione dell'economia basata sull'aziendalismo e sulla proprietà privata in economia senza merci e senza "aziende", 1921).
- - Terra, acqua e sangue (1950).

Pagg. 42. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

LA QUESTIONE AGRARIA

- - La questione agraria (Esposizione divulgativa del problema dal punto di vista marxista nella polemica con i socialisti in una conferenza alla Casa del popolo di Roma, 1921).
- - Le lotte di classe nella campagna italiana (1949).

- - Proletariato e riforma agraria (1949).
- - Questione agraria e opportunismo (1949).
- - Socialismo e gestioni collettive (1949).
- - Patria economica? (1951).
- - Sottosuolo e monopolio (1951).
- - L'era fasulla degli elisabettini (1953).
- - Patti coloniali, stabilità da forza (1957).
- - Ospiti di terra matrigna: l'infame politica agraria del nazionalcomunismo (1957)

Pagg. 162. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

LA QUESTIONE MERIDIONALE

"La ciarla del Medioevo sopravvivente in Italia non solo dimentica che cosa fu il feudalesimo, ma dimentica che ve ne fu in Italia meno che altrove, e nel Sud meno che al Nord".

- - La "mancata rivoluzione borghese" in Italia (1946)
- - I Socialisti e il Mezzogiorno (1949)
- - Il rancido problema del Sud italiano (1950)
- - Meridionalismo e moralismo (1954)

Pagg. 160. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

I FATTORI DI RAZZA E NAZIONE NELLA TEORIA MARXISTA (1953)

Studio dei rapporti fra produzione, riproduzione della specie e organizzazione economica. Il fattore nazionale nelle diverse epoche storiche e la lotta rivoluzionaria nel processo di formazione e liberazione degli Stati nazionali borghesi. La questione nazionale nell'ambito della rivoluzione proletaria.

Pagg. 176. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

VULCANO DELLA PRODUZIONE O PALUDE DEL MERCATO?

"La marcia rivoluzionaria della capitalizzazione del mondo rallenta proprio quando ci si aspetta che il capitale 'liberi' dall'indigenza masse umane costrette ad un'esistenza bestiale, ma l'indigenza è già un prodotto della capitalizzazione, dell'espropriazione, del trasferimento di ricchezza locale alle metropoli. L'avanzamento inesorabile del mercato mondiale distrugge per sempre le superstiti isole chiuse di lavoro-consumo, ma porta i prodotti di immense fabbriche che sono altrove".

- - Vulcano della produzione o palude del mercato? (1954).
- - Traiettorie e catastrofe della forma capitalistica nella classica monolitica costruzione del marxismo (1957).

- - La teoria del plusvalore di Carlo Marx base viva e vitale del comunismo (1924).

Pagg. 256. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

DRAMMI GIALLI E SINISTRI DELLA MODERNA DECADENZA SOCIALE (1951-1953)

Raccolta di testi sull'antitesi fra la dinamica del capitalismo e la vita sociale della specie umana in rapporto organico con la natura.

- - Piena e rotta della civiltà borghese (1951).
- - Omicidio dei morti (1951).
- - Politica e costruzione (1952).
- - Pubblica utilità, cuccagna privata (1952).
- - Specie umana e crosta terrestre (1952).
- - Spazio contro cemento (1953).
- - Drammi gialli e sinistri della moderna decadenza sociale (1956).
- - La leggenda del Piave (1963).
- - Questa friabile penisola si disintegrerà sotto l'alluvione delle leggi speciali (1966).
- - Esploratori nel domani (1952).

Pagg. 174. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

MAI LA MERCE SFAMERA' L'UOMO (1953-1954)

"La dottrina della rendita di Marx vale a stabilire in modo irrevocabile la limitatezza storica della maniera capitalistica di sciogliere il rapporto fra produzione e consumo delle collettività umane. Le necessità alimentari di queste non saranno mai risolte dal processo di accumulazione del capitale, per quanto possa procedere la tecnica, la composizione organica del capitale, la massa dei prodotti ottenibile dallo stesso tempo di lavoro... L'equazione capitalismo uguale fame è irrevocabilmente stabilita".

Pagg. 315. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

PROPRIETA' E CAPITALE

Il capitalismo al suo apice anticipa già nel suo seno attività sociali senza conto economico, "anzi, le più vaste e moderne esigenze della vita collettiva possono essere soddisfatte soltanto uscendo dai criteri mercantili e tornacontistici". Bisogna trasformare l'estorsione di plusvalore che sta alla base dell'attuale modo di produzione in semplice applicazione di energia sociale, eliminando l'economia "simbolica" monetaria e sostituendola con l'economia di quantità "fisiche".

- - Proprietà e capitale. L'economia contemporanea come dimostrazione della validità scientifica del marxismo (1948).

- - Il programma rivoluzionario della società comunista elimina ogni forma di proprietà del suolo, degli impianti di produzione e dei prodotti del lavoro (1958).

Pagg. 206. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

O RIVOLUZIONE O GUERRA

Un insieme di testi che offre al militante il completo intreccio fra l'economia del capitalismo giunto alla fase imperialistica, la sua esigenza di controllo militare del mondo, le ideologie che stanno alla base della sua conservazione e la teoria del movimento che è storicamente chiamato a distruggerli.

- - Partiti operai e politica estera (1949).
- - Borghesia italiana fellona (1949).
- - Pacifismo e comunismo (1949).
- - Marxismo e partigianesimo (1949).
- - Socialismo e nazione(1950).
- - Guerra e rivoluzione (1950).
- - Guerra imperialista e guerra rivoluzionaria (1950).
- - La guerra rivoluzionaria proletaria (1950).
- - Romanzo della guerra santa (1950).
- - Stato proletario e guerra (1950).
- - Schifo e menzogna del Mondo Libero (1950).
- - Il pianeta è piccolo (1950).
- - La daga e Venerdì, l'atomica e Mao (1950).
- - Partirà Stenterello? (1951).
- - Lode dell'aggressore (1951).
- - Onta e menzogna del difesismo (1951).
- - Tartufo, o del pacifismo (1951).
- - L'eguaglianza delle nazioni, bidone supremo (1951).
- - Preparate il canguro (1952).

Pagg. 178. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

IMPRESE ECONOMICHE DI PANTALONE (1949-1952)

Critica ironica e rigorosa ai miti del Welfare State e dell'intervento statale come droga per rivitalizzare l'economia asfittica del capitalismo maturo; tagliente anticipazione dei crolli dell'"economia del benessere" e della società "pianificata" orientale, oltre che dimostrazione dell'inutilità della classe borghese per dirigere gli affari capitalistici.

- - Il marxismo dei cacagli (1952).
- - Nel vortice della mercantile anarchia (1952).
- - Imprese economiche di Pantalone (1950).
- - Profeti dell'economia demente (1950).

- - Dottrina del diavolo in corpo (1951).
- - Socialismo da "coupons" (1951).
- - Il proletariato cliente. Politica economica USA-pacchiana (1952).
- - L'imperatrice delle acque purgative (1952).
- - 13 contro 13, ma in gara di socialità (1952).
- - Far investire gli ignudi (1950).
- - Anima del cavallo a vapore (1953).

Pagg.155. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

BUSSOLE IMPAZZITE

Testo indispensabile per rinfrescare la memoria intorno alle cause e agli effetti delle ricorrenti sbandate all'interno del movimento rivoluzionario.

"Indubbiamente se oggi le avanguardie anche sparute e disperse della corrente proletaria rivoluzionaria attraversano un periodo di indiscutibile smarrimento, e mostrano troppo spesso di non sapere più da che parte è il Sud del capitalismo e il Nord del comunismo, l'Occidente della reazione e l'Oriente della rivoluzione, va detto che siamo in una "tempesta magnetica" della storia, nella quale è molto facile smarrire ogni orientamento..."

- - Bussole impazzite (1951).
- - Inflazione dello Stato (1949).
- - Ancora sull'inflazione dello Stato (1949).
- - Chiocciola russa, cuculo capitalista (1951).
- - Arciboziata: il comunismo nazionale (1950).
- - Neutralità (1949).
- - United States of Europa (1950).
- - Battaglia nella pappa (1950).
- - Politique d'abord! (1952).
- - Olimpiadi dell'amnesia (1952).

Pagg. 128. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

IL BATTILOCCHIO NELLA STORIA

"Una delle mistificazioni che più o meno coscientemente sono state fatte circolare sulla Sinistra è il presunto carattere innovativo della teoria del battilocchio.

Le questioni che riguardano la 'funzione della personalità nella storia', come giustamente l'ha chiamata Plechanov, non sono affatto assimilabili ad una 'teoria' particolare, ma rientrano nella generale concezione materialistica marxista".

- - Gli intellettuali e il marxismo (1949).
- - La dottrina dell'energumeno (1949).

- - Marxismo e "Persona Umana" (1949).
- - Avanti, barbari! (1951).
- - Il battilocchio nella storia (1953).
- - Superuomo ammosciati (1953).
- - Fantasime carlailiane (1953).

Pagg. 106. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

CLASSE, PARTITO, STATO NELLA TEORIA MARXISTA

Burocrazia e centralismo, antiburocrazia e localismo: la dominazione del Capitale e le reazioni immediatiste alla necessità borghese di rafforzare il controllo sociale. Una polemica con gli assertori di forme intermedie fra capitalismo e socialismo.

- - La batracomiomachia (1953).
- - Gracidamento della prassi (1953).
- - Danza di fantocci: dalla coscienza alla cultura (1953).
- - Sotto la mole del Leviathan (1952).
- - La "pochade" comunitaria (1958).

Pagg. 114. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

TENDENZE E SOCIALISMO

"Lunga e complessa è la storia della lotta tra le contrastanti interpretazioni e tendenze del socialismo, ma le divergenze, traendo le somme da decenni di dibattiti, si riducono essenzialmente alle prospettive circa lo svolgimento dell'era capitalista e a quelle conseguenti circa i modi e le forme della lotta per il trapasso al socialismo ossia circa la questione dello Stato, e dell'impiego della violenza rivoluzionaria".

- - Tendenze e socialismo (1947).
- - Abbasso la repubblica borghese, abbasso la sua costituzione (1947).
- - Dopo la garibaldina (1948).
- - Dopo l'attentato e lo sciopero (1948).
- - Tendenze socialiste e questione del potere (1949).
- - I socialisti e le colonie (1949).
- - I socialisti e le monarchie (1949).
- - Tendenze e scissioni socialiste (1949).
- - Proletariato e alleanze (1949).
- - Movimento sociale e lotta politica (1949).
- - I socialisti e le costituzioni (1949).
- - Bisanzio socialista? (1951).
- - Esopiana socialista (1951).
- - Decorsi della spinite bloccarda (1951).
- - Coerenza di anziani, contorsione di juniori (1952).

Pagg. 128. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

CHIESA E FEDE, INDIVIDUO E RAGIONE, CLASSE E TEORIA

"La posizione dei marxisti dinanzi al problema religioso è stata troppo confusa con quella propria una volta della borghesia nascente e rivoluzionaria, e considerata una semplice sottoclasse di un generale razionalismo e ateismo, con relativi sviluppi anticlericali, sotto il cui ombrellone borghesi 'progressivi' e proletari socialisti stavano fianco a fianco".

- - Cristianesimo e marxismo (1949).
- - Il marxismo di fronte a Chiesa e Stato (1949).
- - Cristianesimo e politica (1949).
- - Anticlericalismo e socialismo (1949).
- - Laicità e marxismo (1949).
- - Ossature giubilari teoretiche (1950).
- - Chiesa e fede, individuo e ragione, classe e teoria (1950).
- - Sorda ad alti messaggi la civiltà dei quiz (1956).

Pagg. 103. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

AMERICA

"Per poter contrapporre a questo strapotere mondiale una resistenza paragonabile con le sue spietate risorse, bisognava non aver pascolato per tutti gli anni di guerra col gregge della imbecillità borghese d'Europa invocante dalla forza industriale e militare di America la salvezza suprema... La campagna internazionale antiamericana che si inscena con accorti passi, inguaribilmente *progressivi*, dagli ex comunisti di Mosca parte battuta...".

- - America (1947).
- - Ancora America (1948).
- - Aggressione all'Europa (1949).
- - Politica europea degli USA (1949).
- - Corea è il mondo (1950).
- - "Punti" democratici e programmi imperiali (1950).
- - Imperialismo "vecchio" e "nuovo" (1950).
- - Non potete fermarvi, solo la rivoluzione lo può (1951).

Pagg. 74. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

VAE VICTIS GERMANIA!

"Oggi, dopo appena cinque anni dalla fine della guerra, siamo già a leggere titoli come questi: 'per la salvezza della libertà europea è indispensabile l'armamento della Germania'! Ah! Branco ignobile di porci del potenziale di centomila cavalli! Fino a questo punto arriva la sicurezza che vi ispira l'ingenuità, l'amnesia, la

credulità delle masse! Da quarant'anni ci avete ammorbato con questi tedeschi, con il "delenda Carthago", gridato senza soste contro tutto quanto sapeva di teutonico, colla bugia, colla farsa, coll'infamia della difesa contro le aggressioni! Più ancora: sono in fondo duemila anni che scocciate".

- - Sua Maestà l'Acciaio (1950).
- - Esecuzione capitale ed esecuzione del capitale (1953).
- - Gli operai berlinesi sono insorti contro la galera del lavoro salariato (1953).
- - Al di là e al di qua della cortina di ferro (1953).
- - La Comune di Berlino: dura e lunga la strada, meta grande e lontana (1953).
- - Il capitalismo tedesco affila gli artigli (1953).
- - Buchenwald è il capitalismo (1960).
- - Chi mai dietro la svastica? (1960).
- - Torna la questione ebraica? (1960).
- - "Vae Victis", Germania (1960).
- - Auschwitz o il grande alibi (1960).

Pagg. 87. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

FARINA, FESTA E FORCA

La farsesca doppia anima dello stalinismo nostrano del dopoguerra, servile illusione riformista e millanteria partigianesca. "Noi definiamo come illegalismo bastardo quello che si definisce in tre facce. Programma teorico e agitatorio di democrazia e legalità istituzionale. Predisposizione di gruppi per l'azione armata (fin che ci si vuol credere: in fondo si tratta di rigurgiti dell'illegalismo borghese antifascista). Periodica minaccia di passaggio dal legalismo all'illegalismo".

- - Capitalismo e processi politici (1949)
- - Processi politici, fini e mezzi (1949).
- - Pagliacciate parlamentari (1949).
- - I comuni e il socialismo (1949).
- - Riformismo e socialismo (1950).
- - Capitalismo e riforme (1950).
- - Lotte operaie e leggi eccezionali (1950).
- - Terra, acqua e sangue (1950).
- - Profittatori dell'anticomunismo (1951).
- - Libidine di servire (1951).
- - Farina, festa e forca (1951).
- - La legalité nous tue (1952).
- - Lebbra dell'illegalismo bastardo (1952).
- - Sbrindellata e conculcata libertà (1952).

Pagg. 185. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

O PREPARAZIONE RIVOLUZIONARIA O PREPARAZIONE ELETTORALE (1919-1926)

Bilancio e documentazione del parlamentarismo rivoluzionario. Interventi di Zinoviev e Trotzky. La frazione "Astensionista" in Italia. La discussione al Secondo Congresso dell'Internazionale, l'intervento di Bordiga, la risposta di Lenin e la replica. Le battaglie pratiche e la critica dell'astensionismo di maniera come della disciplina formale alle decisioni dell'I.C. Bilancio dell'Aventino nelle Tesi di Lione.

In appendice: "Il cadavere ancora cammina" (1953).

Pagg. 82. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

LA SINISTRA COMUNISTA NEL CAMMINO DELLA RIVOLUZIONE (1970)

- - In morte di Amadeo Bordiga.: una milizia esemplare al servizio della rivoluzione.
- - Forgiatore di militanti.

Presentazione di testi significativi sullo sviluppo della Sinistra e delle sue battaglie:

- - Contro la socialdemocrazia riformista e patriottica.
- - Verso il partito comunista e l'Internazionale rivoluzionaria.
- - Partito e Internazionale.
- - In difesa del partito e dell'Ottobre.
- - Ricostruzione della dottrina e del partito.
- - Verso un nuovo assalto proletario.

Pagg. 245. Edizioni Sociali, Roma 1976.

RUSSIA E RIVOLUZIONE NELLA TEORIA MARXISTA (1954)

Confutazione delle tesi errate sullo sviluppo dell'economia e della società in Russia dopo la Rivoluzione d'Ottobre; negazione del preteso socialismo sovietico e comunque di pretesi nuovi rapporti di produzione intermedi tra capitalismo e socialismo.

Pagg. 222. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1990.

STRUTTURA ECONOMICA E SOCIALE DELLA RUSSIA D'OGGI (1955)

La rivoluzione d'Ottobre fu politicamente, e quindi socialmente, proletaria e socialista anche se non poté essere conclusa con la rivoluzione in Occidente e quindi fu sconfitta. Un poderoso studio storico, economico e politico sullo sviluppo rivoluzionario delle forze produttive (capitalismo) in Russia dalla Rivoluzione d'Ottobre al secondo dopoguerra attraverso lo scontro fra la

concezione marxista di questo sviluppo e la mistificazione staliniana del "socialismo in un solo paese". In appendice: "Le grandi questioni storiche della rivoluzione in Russia" e "La Russia nella grande rivoluzione e nella società contemporanea".

Pagg. 750. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1976.

LEZIONI DELLE CONTRORIVOLUZIONI

"Il marxismo non è la dottrina delle rivoluzioni ma quella delle controrivoluzioni: tutti sanno dirigersi quando si afferma la vittoria, ma pochi sanno farlo quando giunge, si complica e persiste la disfatta".

- - Appello per la riorganizzazione internazionale del movimento (1949).
- - Lezioni delle controrivoluzioni (1951).
- - Armamento e investimento (1951).
- - La controrivoluzione maestra (1951).

Pagg. 84. Ed. Quaderni Internazionalisti, Torino 1992.

DIALOGATO CON STALIN (1952)

Risposta alle "Osservazioni" che Stalin oppone a un gruppo di economisti russi, pubblicate da Rinascita col titolo "Problemi economici del socialismo in URSS". Tre punti fondamentali di dissenso nei confronti dello stalinismo: in campo tattico, in campo politico e in campo economico; tre fasi che formano la sequenza temporale del rinnegamento del marxismo.

Pagg. 160. Ed. Quad. Int. 1997.

DIALOGATO CON I MORTI (1956)

Risposta al falso rinnegamento di Stalin da parte dei suoi ex idolatri al XX congresso del PCUS. "E' certo che ogni passo della inabissata degli uomini del Cremlino nelle sabbie mobili della controrivoluzione borghese, avvicina il duro, aspro traguardo della ricostituzione del partito rivoluzionario".

Pagg. 154. Ed. Programma comunista, Milano 1956.

B. Compact Disk from the Historical Archive of n+1

CD nn. 1 e 2 - Il Soviet

1918 al 1921 Raccolta delle annate

CD n. 3 - Dalla formazione della Sinistra Comunista al Partito Comunista Internazionale

- 1914 Circolo Carlo Marx - Opuscolo
- 1914 Il Socialista - Organo della sezione napoletana del PSI
- 1918-1923 Sinistra Comunista e Guardia rossa - Documenti dall'Archivio di Stato Pubbl. Sicur.
- 1920 Il Comunista Primi otto numeri
- 1921 Manifesti del PCdI - Libro
- 1921 Bulletin - Notiziario in tedesco e francese sul PCd'I
- 1921 Questione agraria - Libro
- 1921-22 Rassegna comunista - Raccolta completa
- 1921 Relazione della Frazione Comunista al Congresso del PSI - Dossier
- 1922 La struttura di lavoro del Partito Comunista d'Italia. Relazione del CC al II Congresso - Dossier
- 1922 Come si costituì il Partito Comunista d'Italia - Opuscolo
- 1923 Il processo ai comunisti italiani - Gli arresti e l'istruttoria - Il dibattito e le arringhe - La sentenza. Libro
- 1924 Prometeo. Rivista della Sinistra Comunista - Tutti i numeri usciti
- 1926 Plateforme de la Gauche bordiguiste pour le Congres du PCF - Dossier (Tesi di Lione)
- 1928-34 Prometeo - Tutti i numeri usciti
- 1931 Bollettino Interno - Opuscolo
- 1938 Il seme comunista
- 1944 Per la costituzione del nuovo partito di classe - Opuscolo
- 1944 Schema del programma del partito - Opuscolo
- 1945 Che cosa e e cosa vuole il PCInt - Opuscolo
- 1945 Piattaforma politica del PCInt - Opuscolo
- 1945 Statuto del PCInt - Opuscolo
- 1945 Volantini del PCInt
- 1946 Bozza di Piattaforma per il PCInt
- 1946 Entre deux mondes
- 1948 Primo Congresso del PCInt - Dossier
- 1951 Bollettino per il II Congresso PCInt - Opuscolo
- 1953 Sul filo del tempo - Opuscolo

CD n. 4 - Battaglia Comunista.

1945-1952 Raccolta delle annate

CD nn. 5 e 6 - Il programma comunista

1952-1973 - Raccolta delle annate

CD n. 7 - La frazione all'estero

- 1931-33 Bulletin d'Information
- 1933-1938 Bilan
- 1938 Octobre

CD n. 8 - Communisme

1937-1939 Raccolta delle annate

CD n. 9 - Programme communiste

1957-1982 Raccolta delle annate

C. Collected Works "On the Thread of Time"

A collection of works from the series "Sul Filo del Tempo" translated to english, available in the library of Balance y Avante:

https://balanceyavante.comrades.sbs/Pages/lib_of_the_italian_left.html

D. Various Publications

Those who have already read this volume and have had the opportunity to read other material on the "Italian" Left have realized how little this movement has been understood. It is not just a problem of understanding. The fury with which the opportunists opposed the Left demonstrates how, with skin instinct, they rightly considered it the enemy of their positions and actions. But both the ruthless and crude political struggle, and the rediscovery by some intellectuals and "sympathizers", pose the problem of the absolute incompatibility of the Left not only with those who openly fought it but also with *the vast majority* of those who refer to it illegally.

The publications of which we provide a partial list all deal directly or indirectly with Bordiga and the movement he represented. These publications, apart from the strictly documentary part, do not help in the slightest to understand what the current that had gathered around a leader like Bordiga was.

- Agosti Aldo, *La terza Internazionale. Storia documentaria*. vol. I, t. 1-2, 1919-1923; vol. II, t. 1-2, 1924-1928; Editori Riuniti Roma 1974 e 1976
- Amendola Giorgio, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano 1921-1943* Editori Riuniti Roma 1978
- Bellini Fulvio - Galli Giorgio, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, Schwarz, Milano 1953
- Bongiovanni Bruno (a cura di), *L'antistalinismo di sinistra e la natura sociale dell'URSS*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1975.
- Camatte Jacques, *Verso la comunità umana*, Jaka Book, Milano 1978.

- Camatte Jacques, *Comunità e comunismo in Russia*, Jaka Book, Milano 1974.
- Cortesi Luigi, *Le origini del PCI*, Laterza, Bari 1972
- Cortesi Luigi, *Amadeo Bordiga nella storia del comunismo*, Edizioni Scientifiche italiane, Napoli, 1999.
- Corvisieri Silverio, *Trotsky e il comunismo italiano* Samonà e Savelli, Roma 1969
- Damen Onorato, *Amadeo Bordiga. Validità e limiti d'una esperienza*, Epi, Milano 1971.
- De Clementi Andreina, *Amadeo Bordiga*, Einaudi, Torino 1971.
- De Felice Franco, *Serrati, Bordiga, Gramsci e il problema della rivoluzione in Italia. 1919-1920*, De Donato, Bari 1971
- Del Noce Augusto, *Il suicidio della rivoluzione*, Rusconi, Milano 1978.
- Fatica Michele, *Origini del fascismo e del comunismo a Napoli (1911-1915)*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1971
- Gerosa Luigi, *L'ingegnere "fuori uso". Vent'anni di battaglie urbanistiche di Amadeo Bordiga*, Napoli 1946-1966, Fondazione Amadeo Bordiga, Formia, 2006.
- Grilli Liliana, *Amadeo Bordiga: capitalismo sovietico e comunismo*, La Pietra, Milano 1982.
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