




# La questione comunista

Storia e futuro di un'idea

Introduzione e cura di Giorgio Grimaldi

*Domenico Losurdo*

Carocci editore  Quality Paperbacks

After the dissolution of the USSR, Marxism, particularly in the West, entered a crisis that appears irreversible. To get out of this crisis — which is not a "destiny" — Domenico Losurdo, beyond any apologetic intent, articulates in this book a historical-philosophical balance sheet of the Soviet experience and of Marxism as a whole. But Losurdo also goes a step further: he looks at Marxism to identify what it is capable of building in the more or less distant future.

Domenico Losurdo (1941-2018) was one of Italy's leading political philosophers. His works have been published in Italy and abroad. For Carocci editore he has published: *rist.* 2015), *rist.* 2021). *The Absent Left* (2A *World Without Wars* (2016) and *Stalin* (5

Scanning, OCR and conversion by Natjus

Library Thieves



Quality Paperbacks · 626

Readers who wish to obtain information on the volumes published by the publishing house can contact directly to:  
Carocci editore

Viale di Villa Massimo, 47  
00161 Rome  
Phone 06 41 81 84 17

We are on:  
[www.carocci.it](http://www.carocci.it)  
[www.facebook.com/caroccieditore](https://www.facebook.com/caroccieditore)  
[www.twitter.com/caroccieditore](https://www.twitter.com/caroccieditore)

Domenico Losurdo

# The Communist Question

History and future of an idea

Introduction and editing by Giorgio Grimaldi

Carocci editore Quality Paperbacks

1st edition, September 2021

© copyright 1021 by Carocci editore S.p.A., Rome

Editorial production: Omnibook, Bari

Layout: Luca Paternoster, Urbino

Finished printing in September 2021

from Lineagrafica, Città di Castello (PG)

ISBN 978-88-190-1102-5

# Index

Introduction. Rethinking Marxism, Designing Post-Capitalist Society

Why The Communist Question?

A new section of the project for the rethinking of Marxism

Western Marxism and the Communist Question

Conceptual structures, history, practice

Communist Movement and the Struggle for Recognition

Marxism today

References

Warning

Premise. "Anti-totalitarianism" and anti-communism as state doctrines

1. Communism as an "upside-down utopia"?



"Anti-totalitarianism" and the Liberal West's Self-Absolution

Communism: An "Unspeakable Word"?

The blurred boundaries between utopia and concrete political project

Nature, artifice, social engineering

Utopia and utopia realized

Utopia and Utopia Upside Down

Myth and Reality of the "New Man"

Development of the productive forces: a new utopia turned upside down?

The "steady state" and "degrowth" as an upside-down utopia

2. Liberal Socialism or Communism?

Marx, Lenin and the Cause of Freedom

"Imperialist reaction" and the birth of liberal socialism

Communism, Liberal Socialism, "Socialism for the People of the Lords"

Liberal Socialism and Communism: Three Opportunities to Meet (Missed)

# Liberal-Socialist Misunderstanding and Communist Responsibilities

## The Basic Limits of Liberal Socialism

Bobbio contra Hobhouse: liberal socialism as an escape from conflict

From escaping conflict to delegitimizing anti-colonial revolutions

The Analysis of Fascism: Bobbio and the Break with Liberal Socialism

1848 and 1989: Tocqueville and Bobbio

Ecological revival of liberal socialism?

Communist Movement and the Legacy of Liberal Socialism

3. Maturation of the communist project and liberal legacy

Liberal Legacy and Criticism of Populism

Populism as a cult of "degrowth" and "nature"

Populism and messianism

Communism as a chapter in the history of religions?

The messianism of the totally Other

The Messianism of Waiting

Ah, if only Badiou had read Togliatti!

Return to "utopian socialism"? A quixotic enterprise

4. Communism as Escapism and as a "Real Movement"

Populism, messianism, rebellion

How Rebelliousness Turns Into Its Opposite

How Messianism Turns into Capitulationism

Unpredictability of the historical process and...

... A Double Definition of 'Communism'

Conclusions. Columbus' adventurous voyage as a metaphor for the revolution

Appendix

References

Index of Names

## Introduction

# Rethinking Marxism, Designing Post-Capitalist Society

by Giorgio Grimaldi

## Why The Communist Question?

In the genesis of a work, the questions and needs that present themselves to the author as elements that decide the movement of his own time are at work. They can occupy a more or less central, or conspicuous, position in the debate reserved for certain cultural circles or even in the eyes of public opinion, and the author's task is first of all to identify them, isolating them from the material that, following the logic of fashions, is perceived as a topic "of the moment", and that "in the moment" is exhausted. The work that fashion (or mere contingency) dictates does not presuppose an analysis of the decisive aspects of its time, but reflects, with greater or lesser elegance, its decisions.

For a philosopher like Domenico Losurdo, who never followed or pandered to fashions but always kept his gaze free and coherent on a goal - "the political and social emancipation of humanity as a whole" (infra, p. 178) -, the first question that must be asked in the face of this unpublished text (the first monographic work to be published after his death, which took place on June 28, 2018) is why he chose to continue the project of rethinking Marxism that animated the last phase of his thought. It is not, as the working title of the volume (The Communist Question a Hundred Years after the October Revolution) might suggest, a text that starts from an occasion, from a contingency. Of course, it is part of the discussions that have arisen since the centenary of the 1917 revolution, but, beyond any celebratory and apologetic intent, The Communist Question intends to articulate a historical balance sheet of the Soviet experience and of Marxism as a whole. Not only that: Losurdo observes Marxism in the elements that flow into it and in what it is capable, in the near or distant future, of producing.

The first glance, turned to the past, places the experience of twentieth-century Marxism always in close contact with the previous founding century, in the critical but profound and essential link with Hegel and classical German philosophy as a whole. Losurdo also addresses the problematic and tormented relationship with Judaism and Christianity, of which some constitutive aspects (one above all: messianism) are of primary importance for understanding the characteristics and limits of Marxism itself, of the communist movement and of the project of "a post-capitalist society" (infra, p. 186). The second gaze, the one towards the future, does not linger in it not because of a thematic coherence of the text but because of a question of a theoretical nature: Losurdo's Marxism expunges the elements of a utopian and messianic character, that is, everything that refers to a future that has the

characteristics of a totally Other with respect to the present immanence, to the present state of affairs, and which is realized in the form of immediacy, with the simplicity and power of the advent of the Messiah. The immediacy of the advent of the emancipated world and the particular vision that this mindset has of it - that is, the complete absence of conflicts and contradictions - are the central elements of a utopian-messianic scheme that (Losurdo insists on this with great clarity) can have a positive function, of mobilization, in an initial phase of the struggle for emancipation. but which can no longer exist at a later stage and must leave room for the concrete tasks of the management of power, without which it is not possible to "build" any "post-capitalist society" (infra, *ibid.*).

Thus we come to a point that has a strategic position in Losurdo's thought and in his rethinking of Marxism, which in this text arrives at decisive theoretical results: it is the question of power. It is precisely the articulation of this question that contains one of the reasons that constitute the answer to the question from which we started: why give priority to writing and publication to a work intent on rethinking Marxism today?

## A new section of the project for the rethinking of Marxism

In fact, a printed version of the file of the Communist Question was on Losurdo's desk, a sign of the intention of a forthcoming publication. By reconstructing the various steps from which the volume was born, thanks to the Archive made available by the Losurdo family, it emerged that it is a specific part of a wide-ranging project, the processing of which covers a period of time ranging from

2014 to 2018, and which includes the material of Western Marxism. How it was born, how it died, how it can be reborn (published in 2017), the text published here and, in perspective, a volume on China and the problems related to the elaboration and implementation of a post-capitalist order. Of these three sections of the project, Western Marxism and The Communist Question are extremely similar; the third, *in fieri*, develops a specific question, which, according to Losurdo, deserved an autonomous space. Proof of this is that, as can be read from a first index reported here in the Appendix, an entire chapter (the fourth) has been deleted: it is the chapter entitled Thinking about China, rethinking postcapitalism, which does not appear in both versions of the text that have come down to us (one in print, of which we have spoken, and the other in files, Created on July 26, 2014 and last modified on January 17, 2017: this is a more up-to-date version of the first).

At this point, starting from the published material and from that present in the Archive, it can be said that, of the overall project on Western Marxism, part of a plan for reflection and rethinking of Marxism in general, Western Marxism and The Communist Question constitute a real diptych: a close, critical, open confrontation with Western Marxism. A further section, on the other hand, instead of looking at China - the great current protagonist of Eastern Marxism - with reference to the West, intends to focus on it, without, of course, isolating its experience. With The Communist Question, then, the framework inaugurated by Western Marxism is completed.

What is completed, then, and what is the path that leads Losurdo to this text?

## Western Marxism and the Communist Question

In Western Marxism, Losurdo retraced the history of Marxism in the twentieth century in order to reconstruct and understand the divergence and fractures between Western Marxism and Eastern Marxism, two categories that directly indicate a specific location, but which, in the final analysis, express two different configurations of the same movement, beyond the actual geographical location. Western Marxism represents the wing that, for both historical-political and theoretical reasons, sees the prospect of a revolution that proves to be less and less imminent in the West waning. In the face of the immense difficulties and tragic conflicts that accompany the complex elaboration and concrete construction of real socialism, Western Marxism brands Eastern Marxism as the degeneration and betrayal of Marxism, reduced, in its eyes, to a mere instrumentum regni in the sign of ilfreedom. The Eurocentric and/or quieted perspective in Atlanticism (sometimes ill-concealed, sometimes explicit), the consequent lack of full recognition of legitimacy regarding the liberation struggles of the colonial peoples and the weight of the Judeo-Christian tradition of messianism, prevent Western Marxism not only from proceeding successfully in the West but also from critically welding itself with what happens outside its borders or at least from recognizing the complexity of the experience Soviet and Chinese in particular.

Instead of proceeding in this direction, Western Marxism has dismissed Eastern Marxism as inauthentic, and has preferred to celebrate itself as a movement that, far from the power and corruption that would derive from it, maintains its moral excellence in the face of the tragedies of "realized" socialism. Plumbing the various articulations of Marxism, which, in contrast to "Eastern" Marxism, likes to present itself as "Western", Losurdo reverses the judgment. That lack of relationship with power, celebrated by Western Marxism in its own right, and the lack of full



recognition and acceptance of anti-colonial revolutions, represented a theoretical (and, consequently, also practical) stagnation. On the one hand, having liquidated power as such, the theoretical work of questioning its management and the problems that arise from it has been renounced a priori. On the other hand, even in the Marxist camp, the West has closed itself off in defense of its own "interests," endorsing, more or less consciously, imperialist and neo-colonial policies. The consequence is certainly not the end of Marxism as such (think of China), but the end of Western Marxism. Western Marxism invited us to recompose the gap, the fracture between the two Marxisms, re-weaving the thread in continuity with the Gramsci-Togliatti line (certainly not "Eastern" Marxists, but - and this is one of the central points - attentive to Lenin's lesson) and elaborating it starting from the experiences of twentieth-century Marxism and from current experiences and problems.

The Losurdian perspective pointed mainly in two directions. The first was the need to confront the question of the concrete management of power; the second corresponded to the acquisition of an overall vision of the world situation - a totality that was never to be lost sight of: this totality implied a gaze not only focused on the West, but particularly attentive to the colonial and, today, neocolonial question. Awareness of the need to know how to manage power and not to be able to liquidate the question in the name of the imminent extinction of the state, and full recognition and attention to anti-colonial revolutions were the result of the reflection of Western Marxism, which indicated these elements as necessary conditions to allow the rebirth of Marxism in the West.

Having elaborated some of the essential modalities that must inform Marxism from within, Losurdo, in *The Communist Question*, now changes the angle of the problem, which remains the same: the rethinking of

Marxism after the twentieth century. The angle changes, because Marxism is now certainly observed and compared with authors who belong to it (the comparison continues, already in Western Marxism, but not only present in it, with Badiou, Hardt, Blacks, Zizek), but it is also observed and compared with the tradition of socialism, liberal socialism, liberal socialism (therefore Carlo Rosselli, Bobbio, Hobson, Hobhouse) in their different configurations, even those particularly sensitive to the ecological issue (Caillé). The focal point from which the analysis radiates, and which illuminates Marxism from within as an object of reflection, is, here, the communist movement.

The history of this movement is analyzed by Losurdo through the successes, the defeats, the dilemmas, the internal conflicts, the open questions, preserving the result acquired in Western Marxism and extending it to the whole field: the utmost attention to the concrete management of power in a historical situation determined from time to time and the overall vision - the totality. We already know that not all of Marxism pays the necessary attention or at least consideration to these two elements, which, fixed in Western Marxism, animate and run through Losurdo's work throughout his evolution. Now, in *The Communist Question*, Losurdo brings together his reflections on Marxism, liberalism, socialism and their combinations, in order to draw up a balance sheet of the results of the communist movement (hence, in the title of his work, as we already know, the reference to the horizon of the hundred years since the October Revolution) and to indicate the positive results to be claimed, and the gaps, the limits to be overcome thanks to the critical acquisition of the lessons of liberalism and the Liberal Socialism. In the *Communist Question*, themes that accompany Losurdo's entire reflection and that marked important moments converge and take on a new configuration: this text, therefore, not only continues and completes Western Marxism but also

takes up, reconfigures and rearticulates fundamental elements of his thought in the framework of a rethinking of Marxism, of which it fixes decisive contents.

Both the question of power and what we have called the overall vision appear in a certain perspective both in Western Marxism and in the Communist Question, where they are further declined and deepened, but they have a precise theoretical basis in the thought of Losurdo, who developed them to the point where they have reached in the work presented here. It is therefore necessary to outline their development.

## Conceptual structures, history, practice

At least since the Class Struggle, Losurdo has focused on the work of reworking and rethinking Marxism, with a specific focus on the experiences of the twentieth century. The USSR, Vietnam, the People's Republic of China - which was established in the last century and is now one of the major world powers - as well as all the experiences of Marxism in Latin America, are in Losurdo's eyes not the pitiless reality of a noble ideal that is unfortunately unattainable, but the gigantic tension, the gigantic work, the expression of an immense movement of emancipation that is measured against the task of conferring political and civil rights and economic and social rights to great masses who have never known either.

This is an eminent moment in a thousand-year-old movement that has spanned world history: for centuries entire masses of men and women have been excluded from full citizenship and, at the beginning of this exclusion, excluded from the complete and therefore real, effective

recognition of their humanity. Relegated to the condition of continuous subordination and considered similar (if not on a par with) animals and work tools (*instrumentum vocale*, as in ancient Rome), they are individuals who do not have full recognition of their individuality, their humanity, their freedom. This situation, which spans millennia of history on a planetary scale, has been reacted to in different ways and degrees, according to different levels whose configuration reflects the mentality and sensitivity of an era from time to time. These movements can be more or less conscious of their own historical function or even of their own area - capable of attracting other groups to their own - they can have a more or less universalistic scope, they can take on - as Losurdo emphasizes in a particular way in this text - a religious or more fully political form (i.e., one that does not confuse the two levels). The history of emancipation thus has a long duration and a long provenance, and can take different forms in any given situation, which must be recognized and distinguished. Marxism and communism are part of this history and constitute, as the twentieth century and the experiences we have mentioned above prove, one of its highest moments, if only because of the breadth of scale they open up and in which they act.

This is what Losurdo claims and defends in the face of liberalism, which is capable of elaborating a complex theorization of political and civil rights and of thinking in a mature and articulated way about the question of power and, in particular, its limitation, but constitutively incapable of being able to conceive the application of those rights and the limitation of power in a truly universal way: the struggle, beginning in the West, for universal suffrage (male and female) and the lack of a rule of law, of a rule of law in the colonies, are one the effect and the other a fact due to the partial universalism of liberalism. The latter is certainly a step forward with respect to feudal society and its closed market (the pages of the Communist Manifesto in

which Marx and Engels reconstruct the rise of the bourgeoisie and highlight its progressive significance are famous but scarcely considered by "orthodox" Marxists), but in liberalism free men and proper men are, As a rule, exclusively whites and proprietors.

In Counterhistory of Liberalism - a fundamental text - Losurdo showed that liberalism and modern slavery had arisen and proceeded hand in hand: how was this possible? The more or less superficial universalism of liberalism was the root cause of this. And at the same time - a decisive passage and theoretical result - Losurdo enucleated a legacy that had to be critically understood and assimilated by the Marxist tradition: the partiality of bourgeois universalism did not entail the liquidation of universalism, of political and civil rights (the "bourgeois" rights), the even arrogant overrule of the question of power and its limitation. On the contrary, for Marxism, liberal partiality had to be freed from its own partiality: it was precisely Marxism which, being authentically universalist, could achieve what liberalism had only partially accomplished, keeping the subaltern excluded. And in that text Losurdo pointed out another element of great importance for understanding the history of liberalism and the mechanisms that move it, and for drawing a lesson for Marxism: far from the fable of automatism that allows liberalism to gradually expand its range of action, it, on the other hand, has acquired an expansion of its universalist charge from the socialist and communist movements. which it has assimilated to such an extent that it has changed its configuration.

This movement, complex, full of passages, irritates two categories of "purists". The first is that of the liberals, according to whom socialism and communism "contaminate" liberalism, which should return to its origins, that is, to a universalism vitiated from the beginning by the exclusion from full humanity of its immense majority. On

the opposite side, there is the category of Marxist "purists", for whom not only is it a nuisance that certain demands, under the aegis of liberalism, have been realized (in fact, the result does not matter as much as the color of the flag that signals it), but at the mere thought of "contaminating" the proletarian revolution with bourgeois content they cry out about the betrayal of the communist cause and see their splendid vision of the future corrupted. It is a pity that it is only a "vision", however, and that not even the neoliberal order, which in fact wants to return to the liberalism of its origins, convinces them that history does not proceed with "pure" solutions. In fact, the liberalism of the origins is affected by the stratification and the different and exclusivist juridical statuses of the Middle Ages and has grafted onto them, bringing with it the traces of them, and the liberalism of the origins in the neoliberal version, having behind it the phase of liberalism that assimilated socialist and communist instances, is not progressive (like that of the origins with respect to the feudal order) but regressive (because it is established by dismantling previous progress). In any case, it does not act as a "pure" system either. By "restoring" a system in a changed historical condition with respect to the one one we have as a reference, it goes into continuous contradiction with itself: it cannot subtract universal suffrage and therefore tries to neutralize it; it cannot deny the recognition of universal human rights at the global level, but it cloaks them ideologically and practices their abolition; It cannot deny the idea of a free market but, in order to protect monopolies, it applies tariffs. In any case, even if the balance of forces is not fair, the neoliberal order is forced to come to terms with a world in which some ideas and demands are, at least on the communicative level, non-negotiable, and that is, again, not even in its moment of greatest success (perhaps in a declining phase) can neoliberalism be applied in its "pure" form.

But the great absentee in both positions, which would like to present themselves as "pure", "authentic", is the historical sense, on which Losurdo insists continuously. And Losurdo's invitation to free oneself from the idea of an "authentic" Marxism because it is "pure", not "contaminated" by the "bourgeois" past, is in line - if one really wants to present oneself as "orthodox" - with Lenin and Gramsci as well as with Marx and Engels who - albeit with important fluctuations (it must be said: one must not remove complexity in order to present oneself as "pure") - invited the construction of a society more advanced than the bourgeois one, to be "the inheritance of classical German philosophy" (Engels, 1976, p. 78), which certainly did not lack the "bourgeois" element.

It is an indication, Engels', that Losurdo has taken seriously and that allows us to understand the theoretical basis on which the reflection on power, on post-capitalist society and on the political and social totality that runs through all of Losurdo's work is based and is linked to the rethinking of Marxism that marks the last phase of his thought and of which this book constitutes an important moment. Losurdo was in fact an exceptional interpreter of both Kant and Hegel, an author who profoundly informed his thought. Of Hegel (among the most important texts are *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns*, *Hegel and Germany*, *The Hypochondria of the Impolitic*), Losurdo highlighted the decisive aspects that connect him to the progressive moments of modernity and showed the validity and relevance of the conceptual tools central to his work. Of Kant, Losurdo documents (in *Self-censorship and compromise in Kant's political thought*) how his political thought is to be read in connection with and in defense of the French revolution and its results (although to be contextualized, the criticism that Engels reserves for Kant in *Feuerbach* is to be considered excessively one-sided). And Hegel's thought is the conceptual framework from

which Losurdo elaborates two decisive aspects of the Communist Question: the totality and the modality of the transition to post-capitalist society.

The first aspect - the totality - is in Hegel the overall vision that is the Absolute (incidentally, it should be rethought to consider the Hegelian Absolute as stasis and/or "closure" of the system, negation of movement), a totality that Losurdo declines as a political and social totality, as an objective spirit. This allows him to think clearly and coherently, without wavering, about the colonial question, indicated with lucidity and decisiveness by Lenin when he invites the colonial peoples to come out of the subordination into which they are forced by the imperialist system. Losurdo insists on this point also and above all in this volume: "like the construction of the welfare state, the process of decolonization cannot be thought of without the impulse and contribution of the communist movement" (*infra*, p. 30). Both are possible because the political and social totality is observed in its entirety: at the national level the welfare state follows, at the international level the struggle for decolonization.

The second aspect, whose foundation is Hegelian, is the Losurdian solution of the Marxist oscillation (present precisely since Marx) between historical and eschatological visions: this aspect is dialectics. In order to think of post-capitalist society, it is necessary not to "imagine the new order as the abstract and non-dialectical negation of the existing order" (*infra*, p. 138). That is to say, dialectics, which is movement, does not proceed according to zero degrees that interrupt and break the historical continuum. This means not only that all messianism is put out of play by Losurdo (although this does not mean that he does not understand his deep motivations: in this text the comparison of Losurdo with Benjamin is splendid), but also that, in the dialectical movement, the truth of the past is combined with new demands, and the "new order" is never



perfect novitas, but together, at a higher level, of past and present already projected into the future. This is how Marxism can become the heir to the highest points of liberalism. Lucio Lombardo Radice praises his words: "The world is evolving, but the truths of the world that is setting are gathered by the new world" (infra, p. 175).

## Communist Movement and the Struggle for Recognition

It is in the confrontation with classical German philosophy, with liberal thought (Locke, Tocqueville), Marxism, Nietzsche, Heidegger, that Losurdo tempers his position: it is at this level that he sets the level of reflection and debate, and it is at this level that it must be placed in order to understand it. Philosophical reflection and historical-political reflection refer Luna to the other because one constitutes the other, Lone informs the other. It is on this level that his reading of twentieth-century Marxism develops, of which he does not expunge any phase, even the difficult and controversial one reconstructed in his Stalin, who does not shy away from what is real incandescent matter. Losurdo's conceptual horizon is that of an overall rethinking of Marxism not starting from a theory that should be brought back to an original "purity", but starting from the interweaving - in reality, even tragic - of theory and praxis, that is, in the tension of theory that becomes praxis in a given historical context: we could say, in harsh reality.

It is only by looking the glory and horror of history in the face that the most striking lesson can be drawn. The all-round reconstruction of the history of the communist

movement is oriented neither to apology nor to execration: both attitudes do not take into account the totality of a movement, of a historical phase, of a historical process as a whole. It is in the overall vision that it is really possible to draw a complete balance, to understand a historical phase and the movements that act in it and are its protagonists.

It is an overall view that allows us to see that classical liberalism elaborates individual rights whose validity - in fact - concerns in the first instance men, whites and owners. It is this same vision that allows us to observe the double standard metropolis/colonies in its different configurations, from that of the colonial and imperialist era to contemporary neocolonialism and imperialism. And an overall vision is one that allows us to see the tragedies and responsibilities of real socialism on which the dominant critique constantly insists: it is not a question of denying them, on the contrary, in order to think and rethink Marxism it is necessary to keep them in mind and not to remove them in the name of the "purity" of the theory. But the overall vision offers a much more articulated picture than the dominant one and thus allows a very different balance: in addition to being an essential and decisive component in the struggle and defeat of Nazi-fascism, twentieth-century Marxism meant the acquisition of a political consciousness and awareness on an unprecedented scale, it imposed a political agenda on the liberal West through the welfare state (which neoliberalism, it is no coincidence that he is intent on dismantling as much as possible), he invited - starting with Lenin - the colonial peoples to free themselves from the condition of subordination and to fight for their independence, political and economic.

Without the communist movement - this is a fixed point of Losurdo's reflection, on which he insists a lot - the world anti-colonial revolution that successfully developed in the twentieth century is unthinkable. And without the

communist movement, it is unthinkable for millions of individuals, previously considered as figures against the background of history, to acquire full human dignity (no more vocal instrumentum) and therefore rights (political, civil, economic and social). From being objects of the master's gaze on the world, masses of individuals become subjects of rights. It is a struggle for recognition (not yet concluded, as the contemporary world testifies) that in the twentieth century has one of its most intense moments, and to this phase of the struggle the communist movement has contributed in an essential way: it is this struggle, this history, this contribution that Losurdo - especially in this text - intends to reaffirm in the face of their removal or the dissolving critique that disqualifies as a simple utopia, and a utopia that produces crime and horror, the communist movement and its aspirations. Instead, it is a noble story, which, like everything human, has lights and shadows: the latter cannot be instrumentally used to dampen the former to the point of completely veiling them.

## Marxism today

This is the legacy of the communist movement, which Losurdo presents in order to rethink Marxism, to relaunch a perspective of concrete praxis. Marxism, in addition to coming to terms with other traditions more or less akin to it, must also come to terms with itself. Its emancipatory power has not been exhausted, just as the struggle for recognition, both inside and outside the West (which must be thought of as an overall vision and not as a privileged space of freedom), is by no means over.

At the time of writing, the world is grappling with a pandemic on a global level: being in this phase, it would be incautious to analyze it in depth. The least that can be said, however - and which touches on our subject - is that what has held up and holds up in the system has strong and constitutive links with the welfare state (think of public health). Neoliberalism demonstrates, in the face of the cornerstones of classical liberalism, of which it is a direct offshoot, that it is not capable of fully absolving them: it protects freedom (of an elite) and property (of an elite), but not - in absolute terms - life (not even of elites, even if they have access to care that is inaccessible to others). That is, even in the narrowest configuration (an elite), which is its own, neoliberalism fails to defend life, does not give it priority, since - in fact - it subordinates it to profit. In an emergency, the system shows its inadequacy: nature reactivates history.

In the face of this reactivation, which is never immediately a solution, but is immediately a crisis, Marxism cannot stand idly by. The pandemic is not the cause of the crisis (nature and history co-belong to each other but, precisely for this reason, they are not identical with each other): this, already underway, is exacerbated by the emergency. Can Marxism - an attentive observer of the mechanisms of capital - offer a contribution and play a non-minority role (or at least not a non-null one) at a time when the neoliberal order - in the global health emergency - demonstrates its constitutive limits? Is it possible to get out of the crisis - which is not, we repeat, the contingency of COVID-19, but is structural to capital - without the contribution of Marxism?

In the crisis (now we are no longer referring - it should be clarified - to the ongoing pandemic), Western Marxism - or at least Marxism which presents the characteristics that are subjected to criticism in it by Losurdo - cannot continue

to imagine alternatives, dream of possible worlds, rely on desiring subjectivities: it is good that we wake up from the regions of the dream to arrive at those of reality, firmly in the hands of those who organize the system that is intended to be overcome.

And here Losurdo's lesson - central to this text - is essential: the subalterns are not accustomed and educated to the management of power, and, in their aversion to a given system, they reject power as such. The result is neither the dissolution of power, nor the overcoming of the system based on that power, but the continuity of the condition of subordination. If Lenin had invited the communist movement to overcome childishness (this is the meaning of Extremism, the infantile disease of communism), it is possible to add to that invitation - in the wake of Losurdo - that of overcoming adolescent phases, rebellion in the first place.

The communist question - this is why the rethinking of Marxism today - enucleates and discusses (and opens up to discussion) a series of elements arranged not to imagine, dream, desire "a post-capitalist and post-imperialist society", but to "build [it]" (infra, p. 186). Not that imagination, dreams, and desires are not possible (and necessary), but never as an end in themselves. What has been imagined, dreamed, desired must be brought to fruition: in its encounter with the difference from which it also springs, reality, it will inevitably change its features, but this is the only way for reality to change its own.

I would like to thank Domenico Losurdo's wife, Erdmute Brielmayer, his son Federico, and Stefano G. Azzarà for the funds made available for the study of the materials of the Domenico Losurdo Archive (the "Domenico Losurdo" Interuniversity Research Group - Department of Humanities, University of Urbino Carlo Bo - has begun work on the unpublished works of Losurdo). I would also

like to thank Gianluca Mori and Alessandra Zuccarelli of Carocci for having welcomed this editorial project immediately and with sincere participation.

But I would like to express once again my greatest gratitude to Erdmute Brielmayer and Federico Losurdo for entrusting me with the care of this work, a gesture that deeply honours me.

I dedicate my curatorial work to the memory, always alive, of Domenico Losurdo, a Master of thought and method.

Autumn 2020

## References

ENGELS F. (1976), *Ludwig Feuerbach and the landing point of classical German philosophy* (1886), Editori Riuniti, Rome.

LENIN V. I. (1974), *Extremism, the Infantile Disease of Communism* (1920), Editori Riuniti, Rome.

LOSURDO D. (2007), *Self-censorship and compromise in Kant's political thought* (1983), Bibliopolis, Naples.

ID. (2011), *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns* (1992), 2 vols., La scuola di Pitagora, Naples.

ID. (1997), *Hegel and Germany. Philosophy and the National Question between Revolution and Reaction*, Guerini, Milan.

ID. (2001), *The Hypochondria of the Impolitic. Hegel's Critique Yesterday and Today*, Milella, Lecce.

ID. (2005), *Controstoria del liberalismo*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

ID. (2008), *Stalin. History and Criticism of a Black Legend*, Carocci, Rome.

ID. (2013), *The Class Struggle. A Political and Philosophical History*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

ID. (20017), *Western Marxism. How he was born, how he died, how he can be reborn*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

MARX K., ENGELS F. (2003), *Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

## Warning

The text presented here is the latest version of the file entitled *The Communist Question a Hundred Years after the October Revolution*: it is the work that Domenico Losurdo intended to publish after the publication of *Western Marxism*. The file, with the exception of the deletion of the fourth chapter and the brevity of the Conclusions, has very few gaps (of which, each time, it is given in the text): it can therefore be safely considered as the almost definitive version of the work.

The editor's interventions and additions are, in the text, indicated in acute brackets < >; if in the footnote, they appear in square brackets [] followed by the initials N.d.C. The most important interventions were discussed by the curator together with Erdmute Brielmayer and Federico Losurdo, in a concerted work in which it was decided how to operate in the method also for detailed issues (punctuation, very rare syntax resolutions, etc., which are not reported so as not to unnecessarily weigh down the reading), so as to establish a philological standard.

In addition to the indexes (reported here in the Appendix), the original file also contains a bibliography,

revised by the editor, who drew up the Index of Names,  
which is missing.



## Premise

### "Anti-totalitarianism" and anti-communism as state doctrines

Radical is the change that has taken place with respect to the dominant ideological climate around 1989. In those years there was a cartoon circulating in which Marx was seen exclaiming: "Proletarians of all countries, forgive me!" History, we were assured, was essentially over, it had ended with the triumph of capitalism, and therefore the philosopher who more than any other had committed himself to outlining an alternative to the dominant system had only to be ashamed. It was a system depicted as the best of all possible worlds and now sheltered from the recurrent and devastating crises to which Marx had drawn attention. Less than twenty years later, with the outbreak of a crisis often compared to the Great Depression, in the West it was the same analysts of the economic and financial world who asked for enlightenment, to orient themselves, if not to the co-author (together with Engels) of the Communist Manifesto, in any case to the author of Capital: ideally, they asked forgiveness from the philosopher previously depicted as an unforgivable penitent. Who better than him could explain the crisis that, despite previous illusions and promises, was returning to engulf the capitalist system, causing mass misery and despair?

The crisis exacerbated the social polarization intrinsic to capitalist society: there was a colossal redistribution of

income, but in favor of the privileged classes, who enriched themselves further and conspicuously, often resorting to simply scandalous methods. We are in the presence of a class struggle conducted from above by the privileged elites: this explanation is also provided by scholars and analysts who are part of the mainstream, indeed even businessmen, by definition internal to the social system they criticize. And so, together with Capital, the Communist Manifesto is in fact rediscovered!

Two years later, in 1989, along with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the first Gulf War took place.

Saddam Hussein's powerful U.S.-led military force was easily approved by the UN Security Council and celebrated by a large public opinion as the advent of the New International Order. From that moment on, the rule of law - the leaders and ideologues of the West assured - would also preside over the relationship between states: the scourge of war was destined to be drastically reduced and even to disappear. The story was really moving towards a happy conclusion, with the realization of the best possible system on the domestic and international level!

The second illusion turned out to be just as ephemeral as the first. The twentieth century ended with the war against Yugoslavia, unleashed by the West and NATO without the authorization of the Security Council and in open violation of international law, and resulted in the installation, by the United States, of the gigantic military base of <Camp> Bondsteel, firmly established in the Balkans and threateningly aimed at Eastern Europe and Russia. Four years later it was the turn of the second Gulf War, which not only lacked the legitimacy of the UN but met with opposition from two authoritative member countries of the West and NATO, France and Germany. It was the brutal renegance on the promise of a New International Order based on the realization of the rule of

law even in relations between States, it was the unveiling of the law of the strongest.

In fact, there were numerous political personalities and intellectuals who called for a respectful bow to the "logic of imperialism", "neo-imperialism" or who brazenly praised the triumph of "Western imperialism", or, more exactly, of that of the United States; a historian achieved extraordinary success by posing as a singer of the British Empire, with his gaze turned to the past, and of the American Empire, with his gaze turned to the present (cf. Losurdo, 2013, pp. 260-7). To tell the truth, there was no shortage of stances questioning the real motivations of the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, apparently a response to the attack on the Twin Towers in New York: "I think it would be fairer to characterize terrorist attacks not as aimed at American freedom or ideals, but at American politics, American imperialism, especially in the Middle East." This is how an eminent English historian of political doctrines, Quentin Skinner (in Passarmi, 2001), expressed himself. This was not an isolated voice. Let us give the floor to two other scholars, this time from the United States: "The American war on terror is a re-enactment of imperialism" (Ignatieff, 2002, p. 11); what inspired Washington, Anatol Lieven observed, was an "increasingly explicit imperialism" (in Lewis, 2002., p. 6). The same conclusion was reached by leading Western political figures: if Ted Kennedy distanced himself from Washington's "new imperialism" (in Molinari, 2002), former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt strongly denounced the "American tendency towards unilateralism or even imperialism" (Schmidt, 2002).

Recurrent crises of capitalism, class struggle, imperialism and related wars and the dangers of war: developments in the economic and political situation have brought to the attention of a wide public three central categories of the discourse dear to Marx and Lenin.

Sometimes, in the course of the debate that has developed, a problematic and non-Manichean assessment of the historical role of the movement has emerged, which has referred to Marx and Lenin. Eminent scholars of different backgrounds and orientations (the American Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel Prize winner for economics, the French Thomas Piketty, neo-Marxist author of an international best seller <(Piketty, 2013)>, the German Jens Jessen, prestigious contributor to the liberal weekly "Die Zeit"), have recognized in different language that it was the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe that paved the way for the "ultra-liberal" reaction. to push back the "great leap forward in social justice" stimulated by the October Revolution, to sanction the undisputed domination of wealth over political life. More generally, there is a growing number of voices denouncing the emergence (in the West, and in particular in its leading country) of democracy as the "domination of the big banks" and of great wealth as a "plutocracy". But is this not the guiding principle of Marx, Engels and Lenin's critique of the liberal-bourgeois world? (cf. Losurdo, 2014a, pp. 20-6).

As far as international relations are concerned, it is the supporters and ideologues of the existing order themselves who end up recognizing, indirectly and involuntarily, the positive historical role played by the communist movement. The way in which a distinguished American politician and strategist describes the collapse of the colonial system is sobering: since the end of the Second World War, the colonial peoples have been waving the banner of "national emancipation" in a state of "growing restlessness." On the other hand, the support given to them by the Soviet Union "on the ideological and even military level made repression too costly," all the more so since the "people's war" was able to effectively confront the technological superiority of the West: gone were the times when, in the clash between natives on the one hand and great conquering powers on

the other, losses were "a ratio of 100 to 1" to the detriment of the former (Brzezinski, 2012, pp. 14 and 34).

That is, like the construction of the welfare state, the process of decolonization cannot be thought of without the impulse and contribution of the communist movement. These are two undeniable merits, at least for those who are not nostalgic for the old regime marked by the colonial domination exercised by the white race (which led to all-pervasive discrimination against blacks in the United States) as well as by mass misery and the overwhelming power of great wealth on the political level.

The conditions would be in place for a new debate on "real socialism" or at least on the authors to whom it referred, a debate on Marx and Lenin no longer burdened by the weight of the Cold War. However, an unexpected and at first glance surprising phenomenon intervenes: in the European Union and especially in the countries of Eastern Europe, despite the frantic waving of the flag of freedom, the tendency to criminalize not only the communist movement but already the ideas that refer to communism is increasingly manifested. Perhaps the furthest in this direction was Poland: "Communist propaganda" is forbidden. As can be seen, the crime is defined in very vague terms, which leave ample room for interpretation and arbitrariness: will the publishers and interpreters of Bertolt Brecht who, already in the title of one of his famous poems, pronounce the In Praise of Communism, also be targeted? To be fair, the rigor of the law should also fall on publishers and admirers of Pablo Neruda and Nazim Hikmet, to mention only the most internationally renowned communist poets. And why limit yourself to poetry? Nor should those who insist on reprinting and publicly admiring the Communist Manifesto and its authors, Marx and Engels, get away with it. At this point, the Index of Prohibited Books is likely to grow out of all proportion.

In Poland, but also in Latvia, Lithuania and other Eastern European countries, the public display of communist symbols is prohibited. The Austrian author, who has carefully studied this legislation, comments: to be consistent, the national flag of Austria should also be hit, in which the symbol dear to entire generations of communists, namely the hammer and sickle, continues to be present (Hofbauer, 2011, pp. 244-5).

It's not just individuals or minority groups that are targeted. In the Czech Republic, condemned to clandestinity, it is the youth organization of a party, the Communist Party, which won 12.8% of the votes in the June 2006 legislative elections. After its representatives in parliament were intimidated or beaten, and some of its militants were kidnapped, tortured and murdered, the Communist Party in Ukraine, which won more than 13% of the vote in the last parliamentary elections in which it was able to participate (2012), was outlawed. Anti-communist persecution is also felt in Lithuania and Latvia. All this without any protests in the European Union and in the West from those who like to set themselves up as champions of the cause of democracy and human rights.

Nor should it be thought that the criminalization of communism concerns only Eastern Europe. In Germany, the legislation that imprisoned workers, employees and intellectuals during the Cold War years or that, at best, prevented those suspected of communism from being hired and making careers in schools, universities, the post office, and the public sector in general, has never been revoked. Even if momentarily rendered superfluous by the sharp retreat of the communist movement, that legislation could be useful again in a different and less favorable situation for the ruling classes. Already, the parliamentary group of the Left (Die Linke) is under the watchful eye of the intelligence services called upon to oversee the "defense of the Constitution": the powers that be reserve the right to

delegitimize and strike at those suspected of "extremism" or communism ("Die Welt Kompakt", 2013).

Let's be clear: anti-communist persecution in the liberal West, or of which it is the promoter, is anything but new. We have just seen this in relation to Germany. This is just one case among many. For a long time, in Latin America and other parts of the world, the U.S. has promoted or imposed the outlawing of communist parties or coups d'état, which for communist militants have meant not only imprisonment but also torture and death. This is not just a matter for the Third World or countries such as Greece, which are on the periphery of Europe. If the "strategy of tension" that has bloodied Italy for many years had achieved all its objectives, the militants of the strongest Communist Party outside the "socialist camp" would have been the target of a ruthless manhunt. All this was done in the name of "national security," which required the potential agents of the feared aggression from Moscow to be neutralized in advance. Now the international situation has changed profoundly; the Soviet Union has vanished. Anti-communist persecution is carried out in the name of defending not security, but the memory of the victims. The crime of communism is more clearly than ever a crime of opinion.

Far from countering the norms and tendencies that we have seen imposed, especially in Eastern Europe, the European Union legitimizes and consecrates them; The reason for this attitude is that the two totalitarianisms, the Nazi and the Soviet, must be condemned in an equitable manner, morally and judicially. In accordance with that principle, the Czech Republic shall strike down with the rigour of the law anyone who dares to pronounce or suggest a 'justification of the communist genocide', without wasting time in specifying what is meant by that expression; The important thing is to reaffirm the perfect

equality between the two monsters, both totalitarian and genocidal, also on a legal level.

The height of the grotesque has been reached in Lithuania: yes, anyone who approves, denies or downplays Nazi or Soviet totalitarianism risks a two-year prison sentence; And so far we are dealing with a general rule or trend. But those who approve, deny or downplay "the Soviet aggression of 1990-91" do not escape justice either. What's this about? The reference is to the secessionist movement that was developing in Lithuania at the beginning of 1991, which at that time was still an integral part of the Soviet Union. On January 13 of that year, in Vilnius, the capital of the country, the special forces of the Ministry of the Interior, sent by Gorbachev in order to regain control of the television station, intervened. The harsh repression resulted in fourteen deaths: at least, this is the official version of "Vilnius Bloody Sunday". Anyone who questions this version and the manner, sequence or extent of the "Soviet aggression of 1990-91" can be affected by the law and is in any case subjected to universal ridicule by the dominant ideology: it would be like denying or wanting to reduce the Jewish "Holocaust" to a trifle, as authoritative Lithuanian political figures proclaim.

The inanity of the comparison is immediately apparent. If a repression that resulted in the death of fourteen people is synonymous with a 'holocaust', what should we say of the bloody terror and genocidal practices to which, even after the Second World War, European countries such as France and Great Britain resorted to restore colonial order in Vietnam, Algeria and Kenya? Preserving the memory of the victims is laudable, but why exclude from remembrance and homage the victims of European colonialism, defended at the time almost exclusively by the Communists? The consequences of this removal are very serious. Think of the neo-colonialist aggression that was unleashed in 2011 against Libya and which saw France, Great Britain, Italy



(as well as, of course, the United States) as protagonists. In the words of a distinguished philosopher: "Today we know that the war has left at least 30,000 dead, compared to the 300 victims of the initial repression" perpetrated by Gaddafi (Todorov, 2012). If questioning the official version of the repression that led to the death of fourteen people in Lithuania in 1991 < carries the risk of a conviction:', what penalty should be imposed on those responsible for the European Union and NATO who are still trying to cover up or remove the massacre <libico> and even claim to have set in motion the war machine that provoked it?

In fact, the sentence imposed on the chairman of the Socialist Popular Front, guilty of having supported the thesis, according to which it was not Russian agents who opened fire on demonstrators on "Bloody Sunday in Vilnius", sheds light on the real meaning of the ban in Lithuania on questioning the sacred date of the new post-Soviet calendar. Rather, they were Lithuanian agents provocateurs, committed to provoking the wave of indignation, the "terrorism of indignation" necessary to ensure the secessionist movement the support of domestic and international public opinion and thus victory. As what happened in Ukraine in February 2014 shows, the use of agents provocateurs is a well-established practice in intelligence operations. but in Lithuania investigating such a practice constitutes a crime (Hofbauer, 2011, pp. 242-7). Anti-totalitarianism and anti-communism are a state doctrine imposed and protected by law; and the criminalization of communism goes hand in hand not only with the falsification of history but also with the violation of the rules of democracy and with the recourse to practices (the staging of bloody provocations) and regime change implemented by the WestRealpolitik under the banner of limitless cynicism.

Is at least the oft-proclaimed principle of wanting to combat the two totalitarianisms with equal rigour

respected? The attitude taken by the European Union towards the regime change that took place in Ukraine in February 2014 is revealing. Among the main protagonists of the coup d'état are political circles described as follows by an authoritative Italian newspaper: these are movements strongly present in the streets and well represented also in Parliament, but whose "roots lie in the Second World War when Ukrainian nationalists and Nazis met on the common ground of anti-communism and anti-Semitism"; a collaboration that resulted in "massacres" and the establishment of "an SS division" to which homage continues to be paid today (Valli, 2014). Thanks to regime change, i.e. the coup d'état supported, indeed promoted by the European Union (as well as by the USA), this movement with a clear neo-Nazi imprint became an important government force.

The least that can be said is that the two totalitarian monsters are not properly treated equally. Established in the course of the neoliberal and neocolonialist offensive, the anti-totalitarian state doctrine aims to strike first and foremost at communist ideas, the movement that inspired and fueled the struggle for the welfare state and against colonial rule. Those who wish to resume this struggle cannot fail to refer to communism; but on the moral and political level, is it legitimate to claim the critical legacy of a movement criminalized by an anti-totalitarianism that has now risen to the status of a state doctrine?

In the Islamic world most exposed to fundamentalism, norms and condemnations for apostasy and blasphemy are increasing. The West takes a mocking and contemptuous attitude towards this phenomenon, but it does not realize that it is imitating the practices so eloquently condemned!

1 On the coup d'état and regime change in Ukraine, cf. *infra*, pp. 171-3. See also Losurdo (2014a, pp. 121-6), for the use of agents provocateurs and *ibid.*, pp. 71-110. for the category of "terrorism of indignation".

## 1. Communism as an "upside-down utopia"?

### "Anti-totalitarianism" and the Liberal West's Self-Absolution

The anti-totalitarian doctrine tends to be imposed by law just as on the scientific level it becomes increasingly evident "the attrition of the totalitarian paradigm" (Panaccione, 2006, p. 369). Yes, eminent historians of different orientations are forced to record this attrition on the basis of the very concreteness of historical research. The current theory of totalitarianism tells of a liberal-democratic society that developed under the banner of the rule of law but which was then attacked, in a sudden and mysterious way, first by the Soviet totalitarian monster and then by the Nazi totalitarian monster, both characterized throughout their existence by a terrorist and all-pervasive dictatorship but both finally defeated. the second in 1945 and the first in 1991. How far removed this uplifting story from historical reality!

Nowadays, it is primarily the dating that is being questioned. Already problematic in itself and of "a strictly limited value," the category of "totalitarianism" can under no circumstances be applied "to post-Stalinist communist systems." Yes, "any such attempt is bound to quickly lead to irrelevance, if not outright absurdity" (Kershaw, 1995, p. 66). Stalin died in 1953, and the Soviet Union and the socialist-oriented countries of Eastern Europe continued to exist for over three to nearly four decades. Not to mention the fact that in Asia and Latin America, countries led by communist parties are still showing vitality today, or are

proving to be more vital than ever. For this reason alone, the claim to dismiss the history of communism as a whole as a synonym for totalitarianism is, in the words of the eminent British historian already quoted, "pure and simple nonsense".

Now let us ask ourselves: when would the scourge of totalitarianism begin to rage in Russia? In a book dedicated to "Stalin in power", another eminent Western historian does not limit himself to comparing the Soviet leader to Peter the Great (both of whom were determined to modernize and Europeanize a country that was largely backward and therefore exposed to the danger of aggression); He begins his research with an analysis of Muscovy for two centuries subjugated by the Mongols and in a geopolitical situation of perennial insecurity: in this terrain and in this geopolitical situation are rooted the autocracy and Γ "political absolutism" that characterize the history of Russia as a whole (Tucker, 1990, p. 16).

This is not an isolated position. Even more significant is the one taken by an American intellectual who became famous above all for his tireless denunciations of the Soviet and communist totalitarian monster. And yet, when the logic of historical research prevails, he comes to conclusions that are in stark contrast to the ideology he professes. Already the articles of the Russian Criminal Code of 1845 represent for "totalitarianism what the Magna Carta was for freedom." Yes: "At the beginning of the twentieth century, the imperial government embarked on an experimental policy that went beyond the confines of the police regime into the even more sinister realm of totalitarianism . . . Everything is politicized and everything is brought under control." Totalitarianism in Russia does not spring "from the ideas of a Rousseau, a Hegel or a Marx" (Pipes, 1992, pp. 422, 445 and 427). Here is an unexpected result even for the intellectual quoted here: in order to understand the scourge he denounces, it is

necessary to start not from the October Revolution, but from the old regime it overthrown.

Albeit through a different path, the same unexpected result is reached by other illustrious scholars of the same ideological and political orientation. In a book committed to denouncing (or criminalizing) the history of communism as a whole, François Furet (1995, p. 98) acknowledges: "the guns of August 1914 in almost all of Europe have buried, in the true and metaphorical sense, freedom in the name of the fatherland." This is the point of view subscribed even to one of the editors of the Black Book of Communism: he invites us not to lose sight of "the 'matrix' of Stalinism that was the period of the First World War, the revolutions of 1917 and the civil wars taken as a whole" (Werth, 2007, p. xiv). Thus, the scourge of Stalinist totalitarianism had begun to rage with the war against which the October Revolution and Stalin himself were rising.

By now it is clear: for a long time, authors who are different from each other have indicated, and sometimes still end up in the present day, pointing to the First World War as the starting point of the tragedy of the twentieth century. While the carnage was raging, in 1917, Max Weber (1968, p. 276) observed that in all countries engaged in the gigantic conflict, even those with the most consolidated liberal tradition, the state was attributed "a 'legitimate' power over the life, death and liberty" of individuals and an "unlimited availability of all economic goods accessible to it." The October Revolution had not yet broken out and Hitler was still an illustrious unknown, and yet, though not in name, the reality of the total or totalitarian state had already emerged. About twenty years later, a French author, rightly defined as "liberal to the core" by the editor of one of his posthumous books (Bougie, 1938, p. 8), strongly emphasized: to understand the "totalitarian regime" that was spreading or the "era of tyranny", it was necessary to start from 1914. Yes, the "new century," what

would later be called the "short century," had begun at the end of that year with "the proclamation of a state of siege in the great belligerent nations of the West." The result was total control exercised by the state not only over economic and political life. No, something even more disturbing had taken place, namely, the "statization of thought." It had taken two forms: 'one negative, with the suppression of any possibility of expressing an opinion judged to be harmful to the national interest; the other positive, by what we might call the organization of enthusiasm" (Halévy, 1938, pp. 225, 244 and 214).

It is this tragic prologue, which heavily implicates the liberal West and those responsible for the massacre, that the current theory of totalitarianism is at pains to remove. The preoccupation of the dominant ideology is all the more understandable because it was the socialist and communist movement that formulated the first harsh criticism of the totalitarianism that emerged from the Great War. Even before its outbreak, but while the "increasing military expenditures in geometric progression" were already evident, Engels warned of the "unheard-of horror" and the "absolutely incalculable consequences" looming on the horizon (Mew, 22; 517). As a consequence of the colonial "competition for conquests" on the part of the great capitalist powers, as well as of the "class struggle", an unprecedented and decidedly monstrous political regime was about to emerge, a sort of voracious monster that would eventually devour individuals and social life itself (ibid., 21; 166). After the explosion, criticism of this regime became an essential element in the ideological preparation of the October Revolution. Writing on the eve of his career, in *State and Revolution*, Lenin denounced the disastrous consequences caused by the war on the political order: at the front, a power of life and death was exercised over the entire male population capable of bearing arms; In the "rear," even "the most advanced countries" (those with a

liberal tradition) were transformed into "military prisons for workers," themselves subject to war discipline. On the whole, the "oppression" exercised "by the state" became more and more "monstrous." It was the "toiling masses" in particular who suffered it, but not only them: it was society as a whole that was devoured by a sort of despotic and bloodthirsty Moloch (lo, 25; 363 and 370).

The in-depth analysis of the regime that was emerging from the war was mainly developed by Nikolai Bukharin. The latter sees a "new Leviathan" looming on the horizon, before which the imagination of Thomas Hobbes seems like child's play. It does not limit itself to controlling production and labour-power, which is reduced to more or less servile conditions. The qualitative leap goes far beyond the strictly political and economic sphere: "Philosophy, medicine, religion and ethics, chemistry and bacteriology - everything has been 'mobilized' and 'militarized', just like industry and finance"; Technological development now serves only to fuel the large-scale production of death and a "horrid corpse factory." There is no doubt that this is a first analysis of totalitarianism, even if the term does not yet emerge. Bukharin also clearly grasps the phenomenon that will later be called the "nationalization of the masses", meticulously enumerating the countless associations that branch out throughout society (for example in the French one) and that organize and regiment it in a choral support for colonial expansion and military policy. It could be said that this super-Leviathan ended up taking shape even in the state of which Bukharin was the leader and then the victim; The fact remains, however, that the first in-depth critical analysis of the totalitarian phenomenon was developed by the communist movement starting from the struggle against war.

To confirm that it is from here that we must start, there is also a reflection on the origin of the term "totalitarianism". It has behind it an adjective that has been



resounding obsessively since 1914. From the adjective we then move on to the noun "totalism" (totalism) and, a few years later, to "total war" and even "total politics," which alone can ensure victory in "total war." Two years after the October Revolution and immediately after the gigantic conflict that had just ended, a book criticizing "revolutionary totalism" (revolutionärer Totalismus) was published in Germany; The qualifying adjective used here serves to distinguish the species of "revolutionary totalism" from the species that we might call "war totalism." Subsequently, "totalism" gives way to "totalitarianism."

However, it is necessary to start from the invocation and implementation of "total mobilization," "total war," and "total politics." It is interesting to note that nowadays an American scholar, a professor at a military academy, in order to describe what is commonly called Soviet "totalitarianism", resorts to the category of "warfare state", of a state built in anticipation of a war and a more or less total war: "The Soviet 'warfare state' and Stalinism are essentially one and the same thing"; and their genesis and affirmation are explained not by "ideological" but by "rational" motives, it being understood that it is a question of war rationality (Schneider, 1994, pp. 2-5).

It was still in 1918 when it was clear that fascism had become the heir and beneficiary of this rhetoric. On the other hand, the irony of the communist Antonio Gramsci (1987, pp. 2.44-5) was scathing: "Five years of purification, of regeneration, of martyrdom, half a million young lives destroyed, another half a million of young lives ruined, the country reduced to a disgraceful tumult of adventurers, traffickers, irresponsible freaks, the national patrimony mortgaged to perpetuity...". In the beginning erat bellum! Opposed by the communist movement that was formed in the course of the struggle against it, the First World War saw the great powers of the capitalist and liberal-democratic world as promoters and protagonists. These

included Wilhelm II's Germany, which was itself governed "by essentially democratic institutions" (Kissinger, 2011, pp. 425-6) and which was certainly no less democratic than the United States, where the regime of white supremacist terrorism raged more than ever to the detriment of blacks (especially in the South). Hailed with enthusiasm by Churchill ("War is the greatest game in world history, we are playing the highest stakes here"; war constitutes "the only meaning and purpose of our lives"; in Schmid, 1974, pp. 48-9), the horrible carnage continued to be transfigured in spiritualistic and even religious terms even after its conclusion. Immediately after the signing of the armistice, Herbert Hoover, a senior member of the American administration and future president of the United States, attributed to the conflict that had just ended a function of "purification of men" and therefore of preparation for "a new golden age: we are proud to have taken part in this rebirth of humanity" <(cf. Losurdo, 1997b, pp. 41-6)>. In Italy, after hailing the outbreak of war as a harbinger of a "regeneration of the present social life", an illustrious liberal philosopher, Benedetto Croce, continued to celebrate it as a "furnace of fusion"

The American historian Fritz Stern defined the First World War as "the first calamity of the twentieth century, the calamity from which all other calamities sprang" (in Clark, 2013, p. xxi). Ignoring or removing this "first calamity" and the "habit of absolute violence" that it engendered (Furet, 1995, p. 100) and starting the history of totalitarianism from the October Revolution, or from Stalin's coming to power in Soviet Russia, has little to do with historical research proper: we are rather in the presence of a rite of self-absolution of the capitalist and liberal West.

## Communism: An "Unspeakable Word"?

Once we have got rid of the ideological-judicial prejudice constituted by the doctrine of the anti-totalitarian State, we can analyze the more properly scientific criticisms of communism. But, before we even delve into this new terrain, it is worth asking ourselves a more general problem. Is the reference to this political tradition still credible? In October 2008, the statement of the then secretary of a communist-oriented party, Fausto Bertinotti, made a considerable impression that, as a consequence of the history behind him, communism was an "unspeakable word". So let's take a look at the lexicon of contemporary political debate: are there more "sayable" words?

At first glance, it would seem less compromising to invoke "socialism," to which the Liberal Socialists themselves have paid homage. Unfortunately, a very dark shadow is cast over this term by a historical circumstance which is impossible to remove: Hitler's party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, was also called "socialist." It was the "socialism of good blood" theorized in particular by Himmler: it allowed German proletarians to become owners of the lands wrested from the Slavs, condemned to be deported and decimated or, for the survivors, to work like slaves in the service of those in whose veins flowed the "good blood" (in Aly, 2005, pp. 2.8-9). And it's not just about Nazism. In the years immediately following the First World War, he professed "socialism," albeit "Prussian socialism," a fervent chauvinist who was not at all impressed by the carnage that had just ended. The short text, a sort of manifesto of "Prussian socialism," concluded peremptorily: "We are socialists, and we do not want to be so in vain" (Spengler, 1921, p. 99). A few years earlier, a few months after the beginning of the conflict (which had not yet involved Italy), Croce (1950, p. 22) had expressed his

appreciation and sympathy for the "socialism of state and nation", and under the banner of the "iron discipline" of war, implemented by Wilhelm II's Germany and German social democracy. Even leaving aside the involvement of classical socialist parties in World War I and colonial wars, is "socialism" really a less "unspeakable" word than "communism"?

Now let us turn to the terms that punctuate the dominant ideology and constantly assume a ringing judgment of positive value. Nowadays, the homage to "democracy" is obligatory, but what was the name of the party that opposed the abolition of slavery to the last in the United States? It was the party that called itself "democratic" and that really believed it was so. And what was the name of the party that, after the formal abolition of the institution of slavery, was most committed to blocking the real emancipation of African Americans and instead supporting the regime of white supremacy terrorism? Blacks were often the victims of lynchings, which involved a slow and interminable torture of the unfortunate person sentenced to death and which were organized as mass spectacles, all under the skilful direction of the ruling party, which was to be exact the "democratic" party. And, to come to the present day, how many wars have been and still are unleashed in the name of "democracy" and its spread? Had he been any acquainted with history, Bertinotti would have realized without difficulty that "communism" is no more "unspeakable" than "socialism" or "democracy."

It remains to examine the term that perhaps more than any other has risen to the title of nobility of the order and of the dominant power even at the international level: liberalism. But anyone who thinks they are, at least in this case, in front of a more or less immaculate history would do well to reflect on an apparently unimportant event that occurred in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1888, "Die neue Zeit", the magazine edited by Karl

Kautsky, published an essay by Paul Lafargue on Victor Hugo and French cultural and political life. But here we are not interested in the subject or the author. In the original text, "liberalism" (libéralisme) appears at a certain point, which the German translator renders as "bourgeois democracy" (bürgerliche Demokratie), and then explains in the footnote: "The author uses the term 'libéralisme.' But since liberalism in Germany has become the rallying block of Caesarism, anti-Semitism and the Junkers, it seems to us more appropriate to translate it as 'bourgeois democracy' rather than the literal translation" (note to Lafargue, 1888, p. 263). Of course, this is a minor episode, but a somewhat symptomatic one!

It is the symptom of a history that has been ignored and repressed, to the point that an author such as John C. Calhoun, still in the mid-nineteenth century an illustrious theorist of slavery as a "positive good", continues to be counted and published in the United States among the "Liberty Classics", among the classics of freedom and the liberal tradition. And the same honor is reserved for John E. D. Acton, champion of the cause of the slave South during the Civil War. To take into account this ignored and repressed history, among the words compared here, "liberalism" turns out to be the most unspeakable; The two golden centuries of this political movement (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) saw the prodigious development of black slavery precisely in the classic countries of the liberal tradition and saw this institution take on a very particular harshness in the United States: free from all political and moral constraints and from all interference of the State and the Church, private property, Including private property in human cattle or slaves, he can wield absolute power and proceed to a complete dehumanization and reification of the slave, to the point that individual members of his family can be sold separately on the market like any other commodity. That is why, in the eyes of British

abolitionist John Wesley, "American slavery" is "the vilest slavery that has ever appeared on earth." To complete the history of liberalism, it should be borne in mind that between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, precisely in the country that was placing itself at the head of the liberal West, with reference to the Amerindians and the Afro-Americans, very ominous slogans began to resound: they called for the "final and complete solution" or the "final solution" respectively of the Indian and black questions. And indeed, during this period of time, the Indians were largely wiped off the face of the earth in the United States, and within the British Empire the aborigines of Australia and New Zealand. And yet, today's leading country of the liberal West continues to be celebrated as the first liberal democracy in history!

Even the names of the movements, and the movements that call themselves a rejection of power and violence, are far from immaculate once they are subjected to concrete historical analysis. "Non-violence"? It is Gandhi himself who proudly declares that he played the role of "chief recruiter" in the service of the British Army during the First World War. To the "first calamity of the twentieth century, the calamity from which all other calamities sprang forth" he contributed in a far from negligible way, addressing his people in these terms: it is necessary to "offer our total and decisive support to the Empire"; India must be ready to "offer in the critical hour all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire," to "offer all her eligible sons as a sacrifice for the Empire at this critical moment"; "We must give for the defence of the Empire every man we have" (cf. Losurdo, 2010, pp. 31-5). A leading exponent of anarchism, Petr A. Kropotkin, who at the outbreak of the war sided with Tsarist Russia, did not fail to make his contribution to the mother of all calamities, which was actually more modest than that provided by the Indian leader. On the other hand, we will see the movement

waving the banner of the disappearance not only of the state but of power as such exert on a large scale, during the Spanish Civil War, a brutal power of life and death and thus make itself responsible for one of the most tragic chapters in the history of the twentieth century (see below, pp. 155-6).

On closer inspection, Bertinotti's dismay at the word "communism" is only an expression of subordination to the historical balance sheet of the twentieth century drawn by the dominant ideology. To clarify this point, it is worth starting from afar. In the 1830s, two illustrious French personalities visited the United States of America, independently of each other. They are Alexis de Tocqueville and Victor Schoelcher. The former is universally known, the latter deserves greater notoriety than he enjoyed: he played a leading role, after the revolution of February 1848, in the definitive abolition of slavery in the French colonies.

The two personalities mentioned here analyze the same reality in the same period of time, but come to opposite conclusions. Yet, both demonstrate intellectual honesty: they see on the one hand the rule of law and democracy within the white community, and the enslavement of blacks and the decimation of the Indians on the other. However, focusing on the first aspect, Tocqueville already in the title of his book celebrates Democracy in America; Schoelcher, on the other hand, relying on the fate reserved for peoples of colonial origin, vehemently denounces the ferocious despotism taking place in the United States. Who is right between the two authors compared? One could say that they are both wrong: elsewhere, speaking of "democracy for the people of the lords" with regard to the USA of that period, I have in fact questioned both the category of democracy as such and the category of despotism <(cf. Losurdo, 2005a, pp. 216-37)>. It could be added, however, that Tocqueville's error is more serious, especially if one

keeps in mind the contrast he established between the love of freedom proper to the North American republic (despite its attachment to the institution of slavery abolished in much of the American continent) and the deafness to the value of freedom reproached to France (also a protagonist, with the Jacobins, the abolition of slavery in the colonies).

And now let's move on to the twentieth century and imagine the world as a whole visited and analyzed by Tocqueville redivivus and Schoelcher redivivus. By focusing on the capitalist metropolis and comparing it with the socialist or newly independent countries, the former would have had no difficulty in noting and emphasizing the better functioning of government and representative institutions in the United States and Western Europe. By devoting his attention mainly to the colonies and former colonies, the latter insisted on the persistence of colonial massacres, on the ferocious military dictatorships imposed in America or, in Asia, in a country like Indonesia. And perhaps Schoelcher would not have missed the fact that, in the United States itself, peoples struggling against oppression and discrimination sought help, inspiration and encouragement by looking to Moscow or Beijing.

Historically, following in the footsteps of Tocqueville redivivus was Arendt when, at the end of 1967, criticizing the most radical exponents of the movement against the war in Vietnam, she declared: "Up to this moment, there has been no torture here, no concentration camps, no terror" (in Young-Bruehl, 1990, p. 468). Ideal followers of Schoelcher redivivus, on the other hand, were the militants who in some way tried to point out to the philosopher that, even if they had not broken into the United States, the "tortures," the "concentration camps," the "terrors" were raging in Vietnam, and flared up thanks to Washington's policy.

The triumph achieved by the West at the end of the Cold War was also the triumph of Tocqueville. And yet...



Converted to liberal capitalism, and stimulated and pressured by the West, from 1989 onwards Russia was hit by a wave of savage privatizations of an often criminal nature: the result was a drastic social polarization, for the popular masses a dramatic fall in the standard of living and life expectancy and what an illustrious political scientist (Maurice Duverger) has called the "genocide of the old". On the other hand, by rejecting the conversion to liberal capitalism and holding firm to the perspective of "socialism with Chinese characteristics", the Communist Party in power in the great Asian country succeeded in the following years and decades in achieving a unique feat in history, freeing "over 600 million people", or (according to other calculations) "660 million people" from misery

As can be seen, there is no reason to consider the word "communism" "unspeakable." Indeed... In the first decades of the twentieth century, a great liberal or liberal-conservative author observed: "The orthodox economists", who, in order to "fight socialism", sometimes

They have tried to demonstrate that the private ownership of land and capital is not only indispensable or vital for social coexistence, but also responds to the absolute dictates of morality and justice, it seems to us that they have lent themselves to very powerful attacks; and their thesis, which at any time might be judged difficult, nay, almost desperate, attains the evidence of absurdity in the present times, when we all know in what ways great fortunes are frequently constituted (Moscow, 1953, vol. I, pp. 417-8).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the process of savage privatization in post-Soviet Russia, which allowed a handful of privileged people to literally rob public property, was summed up by the "Financial Times" as follows: "The majority of the public has been given an effective illustration of Proudhon's maxim that 'property is theft'" (in Boffa, 1997, p. 71).

Nowadays, particularly in the USA, the movement against the unscrupulous and rapacious speculation of

finance capital targets the banksters, using a neologism that results from the fusion of bankers and gangsters; or, with particular reference to the military-industrial complex and the profits it has accumulated by stirring up the arms race and real wars, the struggle movement condemns both "Wall Street" and "War Street". Is there a better word to condemn all this than "communism"?

When Lenin decided to change the name of the Russian Workers' and Revolutionary Party from Social Democratic to Communist, he did not do so with his thoughts primarily turned to the final phase of the post-capitalist society theorized by Marx. On the contrary, it is above all a question of distancing oneself from social-chauvinism, from the "socialists" who had legitimized the carnage of the First World War, not infrequently waving the slogans of democratic interventionism: if the socialists of the Entente countries proposed to export democracy to Germany, the German socialists were determined to export it to Tsarist Russia, allied with the Entente. Unfortunately, the essential and sometimes even avant-garde role played by the "socialists" (and Labour) in the promotion of colonial or neo-colonial wars has not been exhausted: think of Tony Blair, one of the architects of the second Gulf War (on the basis of the false accusation of the weapons of mass destruction that Saddam Hussein's Iraq possessed and was ready to use) or François Hollande, one of the most energetic and unscrupulous interpreters of the neo-colonialist counter-offensive in the Middle East and Africa. Once again, one observation must be made: there is no better word than "communism" to promote the fight against these manipulations and infamies!

The blurred boundaries between utopia and concrete political project

But isn't "communism" inspired by an unattainable and ruinous utopia? It is a central thesis of the dominant ideology and should be examined carefully. First of all, it should be noted that this thesis presupposes a clear line between a realistic political project and a utopia. But is this really the case? According to Schelling of 1809/10, the ideas spread "especially since the French revolution" were wrong in wanting to realize the "true state" forgetting that "the true state presupposes a heaven on earth and that the true politeia is only in heaven" (Schelling, 1856-613, pp. 461-z). What is criticized here as an unattainable utopia is the liberal and democratic state, that is, a political order that today is considered obvious and indispensable. However, let us place ourselves in the time when the great philosopher came to the conclusion that today seems laughable: the ideals of 1789 had not made inroads in any country of continental Europe, while in France the ancient regime had indeed been overthrown but to make way for the military and warmongering dictatorship of Napoleon. In England itself, things were not much better:

Habeas corpus was suspended for eight years in 1794 and troops occupied most of the industrial zones as if they were conquered lands [...]. Pitt, supported by a large part of public opinion, relentlessly persecuted all those who were in favour of liberal ideas or who at least leaned towards French ideas. Riots, insurrections, strikes or mutinies, even if justified by misery and suffering, are mercilessly crushed (Poursin, Dupuy, 1974, pp. 61-4).

There was no doubt in Schelling's eyes! The ideas of 1789 had turned out to be a utopia, and in this conviction the German philosopher was strengthened even more after the failure of the revolution of 1848 throughout Europe: to aspire to a "state of complete law" (Staat des vollendeten Rechts), to a "perfect state" (Vollkommer Staat), meant abandoning oneself to an "apocalyptic fantasy", with the ruinous consequences that were there for all to see (Schelling, 1856-61 b, p. 552).

Other "obviousness" today has also been branded as utopias in the past. Although he was a slave owner and committed to increasing his property, with his eyes turned to the international mission that the United States claimed to carry out, Jefferson felt unease about the institution of slavery and, even if for a vague and remote future, hoped for its abolition. However, this measure should have been followed by the deportation of former slaves to Africa. An egalitarian coexistence of whites and blacks was unthinkable: it would have constituted a reckless challenge to nature and natural differences; The inevitable result would have been an all-out war between the races with the consequent extermination of the defeated (see below, p. 60). The idea of an interracial society was also considered utopian by Lincoln, who at the end of the Civil War cultivated for some time the idea of deporting former slaves: the transfer to Africa was too expensive, one could then think of Latin America. However, the U.S. was forced to abandon this project due to opposition from Latin American countries.

It is especially at the end of the nineteenth century, with the advent and raging of the regime of white supremacy, that the idea of a society marked by coexistence and racial equality was branded as synonymous with an unrealistic and ruinous utopia. To argue in this way, along with the white American community as a whole, there were also quite a few visitors who came from Europe. One of these, who was later to become famous and controversial as a German theoretician of geopolitics, observed, or rather noted, and was obliged to note that in the North American republic the reality of the "racial aristocracy" had supplanted the fanciful projects for the realization of the principle of "equality": separating whites and blacks and placing the former in a position of power and privilege was a "color line" more rigid and insurmountable than in the days of slavery. It is so pervasive and inescapable that it

crosses "even institutions for the blind." Thus, even the "fanatics of education" and education were forced to acknowledge that human artifice could do nothing against nature and its inescapable laws (Ratzel, 1893, pp. 182-3 and 180-1). It is hardly necessary to say that nowadays the picture has changed radically. The dream or nightmare (depending on one's point of view) of a society based on the principle of coexistence and equality between the different "races" tends to become reality in an ever wider area of the planet.

Other examples could be given of the transformation of utopia into reality or into a concrete political project. Think of the condition of women and the relationship between men and women: even with its persistent limitations, the picture that presents itself to our eyes in this regard would have appeared fantastic utopia or repugnant dystopia (depending on the point of view) even a few decades ago, when it was a widespread and almost unshakable conviction that the segregation of women and their exclusion from political rights and liberal professions was imposed by nature.

It is now appropriate to refer to an example taken from a sphere appreciably different from that hitherto under consideration. Not only for Malthus, for a whole series of authors contemporary or later, indeed for what for centuries was the dominant culture, scarcity and mass misery were a constitutive and inseparable element of the human condition. In Tocqueville's eyes, the revolution of February 1848 was already unfortunately infected with socialism and socialist utopianism, due to the fact that it contained "economic and political theories" which, the Ricordi observe, would have led us to believe "that human misery is the work of laws rather than of Providence, and that poverty could be suppressed by changing the social order" (Tocqueville, 1951, vol. xii, pp. 92-4 and 84). Having silenced the Parisian masses with an iron fist, in a speech

of April 3, 1852, the French liberal reiterated: it is foolish and a harbinger of disasters to go in search of a political "remedy against this hereditary and incurable disease of poverty and work" (under the banner of hardship and exhausting toil; *ibid.*, vol. XVI, p. 240).

There is no doubt that, especially since the economic crisis that broke out in 2008, misery is being felt in a widespread and dramatic way in the West itself; but the fall or relapse into this condition is perceived as an intolerable injustice by the very broad masses, including those who are far removed from the ideals of socialism; after the political and social conquests and the development of the productive forces that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the eradication of mass misery was transformed from utopia into a concrete political project.

## Nature, artifice, social engineering

In Friedrich August von Hayek, an implacable critic of communism and, more exactly, of socialism in all its forms and manifestations, the denunciation of utopia takes the form of the denunciation of social engineering or of "constructivism", of the hubris that would be demonstrated by those who, forgetting the limits of human nature, abandon themselves to imaginative and artificial projects of radical social transformations. Yes, but what is "nature" and what is "artifice"? As can be seen from his condemnation of social and economic rights, which he placed on the account of the October Revolution, in the eyes of the patriarch of neoliberalism, the claim to build a welfare state is synonymous with arbitrary intervention in physical and human nature. It was with this tradition behind it that at the end of the last century a leading

member of the American Republican Party could reproach the "welfare state" for having "violated human nature" (Gingrich, 1995).

However, only a philosophically and historically naïve conscience can think that the undisputed domination of the market is synonymous with spontaneous and natural development. On the other hand, assimilating the lesson of an author such as Karl Polanyi, one could say that the totally self-regulating market is a utopia which, in order to achieve even partial realization, has entailed, already in the capitalist metropolis and even more so in the colonies or peripheral countries, the destruction of community ties and cultural and group identities rooted in a centuries-old tradition. with the consequent total reshaping of entire societies. Concentrating here on the capitalist metropolis, it is well to bear in mind that in England in 1834 the liberalization of the labor market and the consequent dismantling of the traditional assistance provided by the poor laws went hand in hand with the further spread or generalization of workhouses - this prefiguration of the actual concentration camps - in which the poor were locked up by a simple police measure. the unemployed, the "vagabonds".

Very significant, in order to understand the ambiguity of the category in question, is the ideological struggle that developed during the Civil War. Well, who, on the occasion of this clash, embodied the reasons for spontaneous social development and who the reasons for oppressive social engineering? For the theorists of slavery, there was no doubt. It was enough to avoid abstract speculation and turn our gaze to history: "Slavery was more universal than marriage and more permanent than freedom"; it was generalized freedom, on the other hand, that constituted "a limited and recent experiment"; But "we do not desire a new world." As has been observed by an authoritative American historian (Eugene D. Genovese), for these

ideologues, slavery was a sort of common law that abolitionists wanted to erase through the "positive action of the State", and therefore through interventions that claimed to force reality into rigid and oppressive schemes (cf. Losurdo, 2015, pp. 70-5).

After the end of the Civil War, in the years of Reconstruction, which, after abolishing slavery, tried in vain to ensure the enjoyment of political and civil rights for blacks, the theorists of white supremacy were equally undoubted. In their eyes, the Union's attempt to impose racial equality and integration from above, by erasing or drastically reducing the autonomy of the states, by resorting to a pedagogical dictatorship called upon to sweep away the alleged racial "prejudices" of the people of the South, as part of a mad experiment in social engineering aimed at erasing a centuries-old tradition and trampling on the consolidated values and customs of the vast majority of the population, was senseless (white), in the final analysis in violation of the natural order itself. Even today, affirmative action is branded by right-wing circles as ultimately an expression of social engineering. One can easily imagine the objections to this ideological campaign. Should the attempt to achieve a society based on racial equality and integration be branded as social engineering or, instead, the institution of slavery and, later, apartheid and legislation against miscegenation? Where was the nature and where the artifice? And, as far as affirmative action is concerned, isn't it an attempt to remedy the failures of a social engineering that has been carried out for centuries to the detriment of blacks?

In a direct or indirect way, the theorists of the South referred to Edmund Burke, the great ante litteram critic of social engineering, according to whom the ideal of equality, the claim of political equality violated "the natural order of things", the "natural social order", indeed was stained with the "most abominable of usurpations", the one that is guilty



of trampling on the "prerogatives of nature" or the "method of nature" (Burke, 1826, pp. 104 and 79). And to the great English critic of the French revolution he ended up referring, directly or indirectly, the same social Darwinism: one of its characteristic features was the denunciation of the social engineering that it believed to read in the projects of democratic transformation in the relations between classes, nations or races.

There is no doubt that the categories with which Marx and Engels and the movement that started from them are completely formal. But precisely because of the formal character of these categories, they have constantly been used for conservation and reaction in order to oppose every project of demanding social transformation, including the abolition of feudal privilege in Europe and the abolition of slavery and the racial state on the other side of the Atlantic.

## Utopia and utopia realized

It is also for another reason that the accusation of utopianism leveled at the communist movement turns out to be far more problematic than the opponents of that movement imagine. After the overthrow of capitalism, Marx evokes the advent of a society characterized by the disappearance of social classes. There is no doubt that this is a very ambitious goal. But now let us read Tocqueville (1951, vol. 1.2, pp. 40, 12. and 188 note). Democracy in America expresses the idea that "castes disappear [les castes disparaissent] and classes come closer [les classes se rapprochent]": indeed: "one can say, there are no more classes". As can be seen, what defines the contrast between the co-author of the Communist Manifesto and the liberal

thinker is not abandonment to utopia on the one hand and political realism on the other; If anything, we see here a contrast between utopia and realized utopia.

Marx's ideal, placed in the future and in a future that has behind it not only the anti-capitalist revolution but also a period of socialist transition, is instead in Tocqueville the result of a process that has been underway for a long time and is now on the verge of completion. In the West, beginning in the eleventh century, "a twofold revolution in social conditions" took place. Yes, "the nobleman will be pushed back in the social ladder, the plebeian will be advanced; one goes down, the other goes up. Every half century brings them closer together, and soon they will find themselves side by side." It is not only the wealth of the nobility, it is wealth as such that is invested at every level by a process willed in the final analysis by Providence: "intellectual activities" are "a source of power and wealth", so that the "discoveries in civilization" and the "improvements in the commercial and industrial fields" become "so many elements of equality among men". All the different factors of the modern world "seem to be working together to impoverish the rich and enrich the poor." In conclusion, the tendency towards "universal levelling" is irresistible: it cannot be stopped or even slowed down, all the more so since "the rich ... they are scattered and powerless" and therefore unable to put up effective resistance (ibid., vol. I.I, pp. 3-4 and vol. 1.2, p. 259).

'Universal levelling' (nivellement universel): along with social polarisation, inequalities in the distribution of social wealth have disappeared; and even if they still exist in some way, they do not entail an inequality in the distribution of political power. It goes without saying that this picture seems rather naïve today. But the essential point is another: the utopia of the dominant ideology condemned today in the communist movement appeared in fact already realized in the mid-nineteenth century, in the

eyes of the French liberal, at least as far as the West is concerned. It should be added that if the utopia reproached to Marx has a critical potential with regard to existing society, the latter is instead transfigured and even appears as consecrated by Providence in Tocqueville.

About a century later, Popper polemicized against the Communists, declaring that "in [Western] democracies most of the demands put forward by the Communist Manifesto had already been realized; 'Largely implemented', by means of 'high inheritance taxes', would also be the point that calls for the 'abolition of all rights of inheritance'. Above all, the way in which the theorist of the open society condemns Plato is eloquent. The latter's fault lies not in having aimed at the "elimination of the class struggle", but in having lost sight of the fact that this objective must be pursued by "abolishing classes" and fighting for "an egalitarian, classless society" (as would have been the case in the West), not by sheltering the "ruling class" from all criticism (as the author of *La Repubblica* does). That is, authoritarian methods must be condemned; for the rest, it is perfectly realistic to aspire to a society "without classes" and without "class struggle", as confirmed by the results already achieved by Western democracies (Popper, 1974, vol. 11, p. 186 and vol. 1, p. 77). Once again, utopia (reproached to Plato and the authors of the Communist Manifesto) has already been realized, and it is realized in the most complete and luminous way possible, perfectly combining equality and freedom! And, once again, the realized utopia is characterized by acrisia and the uncritical transfiguration of existing society; Compared to Marx, in Popper it is not utopia that has vanished, but only its critical charge.

An integral part of the communist society already evoked by the Manifesto is the overcoming of a division of labor that forces the working classes and, within the family, women to a condition of permanent subordination. On the

other hand, as Croce (1959, vol. I, p. 167) objects, in the existing de facto society there is no crystallized "social hierarchy": in reality, "he who is superordinate in one part of social life is subordinate in others, he who is hierarch in one is dependent in others." As you can see, there are no ruling classes and no subaltern classes. But the example given to prove this thesis has an even caricatured sound: "The most dominant statesman will, to say the least, cede the hierarchy to his faithful wife within the walls of the house, or at least between those of the kitchen and the laundry." The utopia realized, confirming the emancipation of women that had already taken place, refers to their imprisonment in the "kitchen" and in the "laundry"!

The tendency towards realized utopia has not disappeared in the liberal thought of the present day. Take the analysis of today's capitalist system some time ago by an illustrious sociologist: "The attribution of social positions has today become more and more a prerogative of the educational system." Property had lost all weight, to be replaced by merit: "The social position of an individual [henceforth depends] on the scholastic goals he has succeeded in attaining"; There was "an increasing similarity in the social positions of individuals," and there was an undeniable tendency toward a "leveling of social differences." This is how Dahrendorf put it; but it should be added that his positions were more moderate than those of the sociologists against whom he was forced to polemicize and according to whom we were spontaneously moving towards "a situation in which there would be no more classes or class conflicts for the simple reason that there would no longer be any arguments for contrast" (Dahrendorf, 1963, pp. 112 and 120-1).

The young Croce, who felt the influence of Marx, had realized the problematic character of the usual discourse on utopia:

I really don't know with what spirit many liberals gratify socialism with the label of utopia. For a very different reason, the socialists could reciprocate liberalism with the same tackle. Liberalism addresses itself with its exhortations to an entity which, at least does not exist now, to the national or general interest of society; because the present society is divided into antagonistic groups and knows the interest of each of these groups, but not already, or only very weakly a general interest (Croce, 1973, pp. 89-90).

A distinction is not made here between the utopia properly so called reproached to the "socialists" and the realized utopia of which "liberalism" (or liberalism) demonstrates, but this is in fact what it is: those who cry utopianism in the face of the ideal of a classless society are often those who end up expunging the class contradictions of existing bourgeois society, depicting it in fact as a society that has already overcome class division and classes as such.

We know that Croce himself subsequently fell back on the positions of the realized utopia, which instead had its most pungent critic in Marx: "vulgar democracy" - Critique of the Gotha Program observes - "sees in the democratic republic the millennium," without even imagining the acuteness of the class contrasts that continue to exist and that push towards new upheavals (mew, 19; 29). Removing their gaze from the sphere of production and dwelling exclusively on the sphere of circulation, bourgeois ideologues, as Capital ironically puts it, present bourgeois society as "a veritable Eden of man's innate rights" (ibid., 23; 190). Those who scoff at the revolutionary programme of the overthrow of capitalist relations of production as the pretense of building a kind of earthly paradise are in turn accused by Marx of presenting existing bourgeois society as the earthly paradise! The utopia reproached against Marx consists in having evoked "an order of things in which there are no more classes or class antagonisms, and social evolutions will cease to be political revolutions" (ibid., 4;

182.); The realized utopia (typical of bourgeois ideologues) consists in giving this "order of things" as already existing.

## Utopia and Utopia Upside Down

But the harshest criticism of the communist "utopia" does not concern its unrealizability but rather the dialectic by which it, precisely in pursuit of an exalted messianic future, more or less inevitably ends up producing catastrophe and horror. Taking his cue in particular from the repression of Tiananmen Square, Bobbio (1990a, p. 127) denounces "the total reversal of a utopia, of the greatest political utopia in history (I am not speaking here of religious utopias), in its exact opposite", in the "inverted utopia". Even more drastic is Popper (1992a, p. 91): "All those who have set out to bring heaven to earth have created only a hell." It is a cliché that plays an essential role in the dominant ideology in the West.

Here we come across a first glaring contradiction. It is a contradiction of which those who on the one hand emphasize the devastating effects of utopia, on the other hand celebrate the moral and political primacy of the West, have no inkling of it. It is precisely here that the literary genre of utopia has found its terrain of choice. The evocation of a bright future, or even one that is clearly better than the present, presupposes a unilinear vision of time and therefore refers in the first place to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Nietzsche was well aware of all this and, in order to put an end to the infernal cycle of utopias and revolutions, he invited us to break once and for all with the Judeo-Christian tradition and with the unilinear vision of time to embrace instead the theory of the eternal return of the identical < (Losurdo, 2014b, pp. 487-521).

The only two great "utopias" and revolutions that we can identify in the thousand-year history of Chinese civilization both refer to the influence of Western thought (and, indirectly, of the Judeo-Christian tradition). This is in itself evident for the Taiping Revolution, whose protagonist, convinced that he was the younger brother of Jesus and in any case deeply influenced by Christianity and Christian messianism, was committed to bringing about a society of equality and justice and the "Heavenly Kingdom of Peace". But this is also true of the revolution led by Mao Zedong, which refers in the first place to Marx (a Western author and undoubtedly influenced by Judeo-Christian culture) and which at the same time pays homage to the heroism and spirit of sacrifice of the Taipings, about whose "gigantic revolution" even Marx expresses a positive judgment (Mao Zedong, 1969-75, vol. IV, p. 469; Mew, 9; 96). On the other hand, Bobbio (1990a, p. 128) shows historical and philosophical naivety when he points to twentieth-century communism as the only or "the first utopia that tried [with disastrous results] to enter history, to pass from the realm of 'discourses' to that of things." The Turin philosopher's gaze does not go beyond the borders of Europe, and even as far as this continent is concerned, important chapters of history and the history of ideas are ignored: the followers of Thomas Müntzer in Germany in the first decades of the sixteenth century and the followers of the "fifth monarchy" in England in the mid-seventeenth century clearly pursue a utopia that they intend to realize on a worldly and political level. And it is a utopia that sometimes evokes somewhat "communist" motives.

It is no coincidence that the reason for the reversal of utopia into "inverted utopia" (to use Bobbio's words) or "heaven" into "hell" (to put it more trivially with Popper) certainly did not wait for the October Revolution to make its appearance. In fact, we have already seen Schelling denounce the ruinous consequences of "apocalyptic

fantasy." We are in the years immediately following the upheavals that had swept the whole of continental Europe in 1848-49. And it is easy to understand the balance drawn by the German philosopher of the historical cycle that began with the overthrow of the ancient regime: in France the revolutionary upheavals followed one another and were intertwined with the devastating wars of the Napoleonic era, while another wave of revolutions and wars began in 1848. Worse still, the French revolution and the struggle for political democracy had led to the rise of the communist movement, which paved the way for new and more serious catastrophes. There is no doubt about it: in the eyes of the late Schelling, the utopia of 1789 had turned into its opposite.

But the most glaring incoherence of the commonplace of the dominant ideology that I am now analyzing is another: neither Bobbio nor Popper have posed the question of whether by chance in their political project there is not an element of utopia that could turn into its opposite. Especially after the triumph achieved by the West in the Cold War, the theory that the triumph of perpetual peace presupposes the expansion of democracy on a planetary scale has spread massively. This is how the pursuit of the ideal, or rather the utopia of perpetual peace, has provoked a succession of wars in the Middle East with no end in sight and which indeed makes us fear the worst. It is Popper himself who, in the name of the final realization of the *pax civilitatis*, invites us not to "be afraid to wage wars for peace" and evokes the possibility of a definitive showdown of the West with China (Popper, 1991b, 1991c). It would be a clash that could easily expand on a spatial level and also take on a nuclear dimension: unlike China, the United States has always reserved the right to be the first to resort to atomic weapons. With his gaze turned to the vanished Soviet Union, Popper drew attention to the dialectic by which "heaven" is transformed into hell; while acting in the



present, he was making his brave contribution to the transformation of the Pax Civilitatis into a nuclear holocaust. Although he resorts to a more sober language, Bobbio also incurs this glaring distraction and contradiction. The fact is that both philosophers spoken of here turn out to be incapable of applying to their own discourse the rules they enunciate for the discourses of their interlocutors or adversaries; And, the lack of self-reflection, despite the coquettish assurances of painful problematicism, is synonymous with dogmatism.

Finally. It is fair to point out that, as fascinating as it is, utopia is not innocent and can even have disastrous consequences. But a similar consideration also applies to the discourse that denounces the overturning of utopia into an inverted utopia. In the wake of his condemnation of the "apocalyptic fantasy" of the French revolutionary cycle, Schelling hailed the coup d'état of Louis Bonaparte and the advent of the Bonapartist dictatorship. And it was also in those years and on the basis of the same assumptions that the theorization of an unscrupulous Realpolitik took hold in Germany, which, putting an end to the idealistic illusions (i.e. utopias) of the previous period, no longer allowed itself to be hampered by compassion for "sickly and deformed people", who invoked the assistance of the State, or for races, such as that of the Amerindians, who claimed to escape the "unstoppable decline" (Losurdo, 1997a, pp. 589-96).

It is precisely from this spiritual climate that Nazism sprang: as the fury of the First World War demonstrated, the "ideas of 1789" and the utopia of perpetual peace connected to them failed; but on the other side of the Atlantic, as demonstrated by the advent of a society founded on a ruthless white supremacy, the claim to found, with the Civil War and the abolitionist revolution, a multiracial society under the banner of equality between the races, failed even more miserably. The main ideologue

of the Third Reich opens his infamous book by inviting us to take note of reality: as the history of the West since the advent of Christianity has demonstrated, the "borderless Absolute" which, "peacefully or violently," claimed to impose the ideological "abstractions" of the "superhuman community of the souls of all," of the "humanization of humanity," of "humanity" as such, it was in ruins and had left behind only ruins (Rosenberg, 1957. pp. 21-2).

Even today, it would not be a bad idea to ask a question: is there a relationship between the denunciation of the history of the communist movement as a whole as an "upside-down utopia" on the one hand and the dismantling of the welfare state and the unleashing of colonial or neocolonial wars on the other? But it is useless to look for this question in Bobbio or Popper.

## Myth and Reality of the "New Man"

Visiting Paris in the months immediately following the revolution of 1789, a German observer with a sober Enlightenment background reported that the character of the French had radically changed for the better as a result of the "transformation of the political constitution"; the spectacle of great popular gatherings, with an order based not on coercion but on self-discipline, without even "a single unseemly or illegal action" occurring, all this moved him to tears (Campe, 1977, pp. 17 and 32-4). In the moment of choral enthusiasm provoked by the overthrow of an ancient regime widely perceived as unjust and oppressive, the impetus to build a new society gave wings to even the most emphatic hopes. It is a phenomenon that manifested itself, in different ways, even on the other side of the Atlantic, during the war of independence against the

British government that resulted in the foundation of the North American republic. On the contrary, it was precisely in this case that the rhetoric of the new man took on particularly loud tones. In 1782 an American citizen of French origin described "the most perfect society now existing in the world"; It was inhabited by "a new race of men," devoid of the "old prejudices." Absent were not only hereditary nobility, but also poverty and social polarization; The wars of the ancien régime and of the old Europe were also gone. And so: "United by the silk bonds of a mild government, we are all law-abiding, and not because we fear their power but because they are just." It is clear: "The American is a new man, who acts according to new principles" (Crèvecoeur, 1904, pp. 30-3).

And yet, the dominant ideology of our day isolates the revolutions of Marxist and Communist inspiration from all the others, in order to make a mockery of them and of the motive of the "new man" which they cultivate and agitate. Does this attitude have any justification for this? By virtue of his historical (as well as natural) dimension, man also undergoes profound transformations on the moral level. Even before Marx, and the political movement that referred to him, it was Tocqueville who drew attention to this phenomenon: it is only in a society that has emerged from a democratic revolution and in which the idea of equality has been affirmed that one can affirm "a general compassion for all members of the human species"; On the other hand, such a feeling cannot emerge where society is torn apart by insurmountable caste (or racial) barriers. In the latter case, far from becoming "general", compassion remains confined to the caste (or race) to which one belongs (cf. Losurdo, 2015, pp. 60-7). The man of "general compassion" did not always exist, he appeared at a certain point, as a result of certain political and social transformations, and established himself as a new man.

The idea of the new man that everyone today loves to mock actually refers to a recurring historical phenomenon that everyone, with a little reflection and historical analysis, can see. Thomas Jefferson felt uncomfortable with the institution of slavery (but not to the point of giving up his ownership of human cattle). On the basis of this, he evoked a society free from this institution, but also free from the physical presence of blacks, to be deported to Africa. And this is because a coexistence on a basis of equal dignity of whites and blacks would have constituted a reckless challenge to the "real distinctions instituted by nature" and would have ended up resulting in "the extermination of one or the other race" (Jefferson, 1984, p. 264). I am quoting here a personality assumed in the Pantheon of the North American republic and the liberal West as a whole. Yet, those who argue in the same way today would be branded as racists: for the new man who has emerged in the meantime, the multi-ethnic society and the principle of equality between all men and women, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or race, are or should be a matter of course.

Let us now focus our attention on a different social relationship. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant (1900, vol. VI, pp. 181-2) had no hesitation in theorizing a "right of parents over their children as a part of their home," a right of parents to take back their fugitive children "as things," or as "escaped pets." Marx and Engels were therefore right a few decades later to denounce the fact that, in the patriarchal family of the time, children were the "slaves" of the father (Mew, 3; 32). Nowadays even the most stubborn conservatives are in fact closer to Marx than to Kant. The latter is undoubtedly to be counted among the greatest moral philosophers of all time; Yet, anyone who argues in the same way today would be considered a barbarian. And again the reality of the new man emerges!

To be exact, the German ideology cited above observes that in the patriarchal society of the time, along with children, "women" are also among "the slaves of man" or of the pater familias (ibid.). Nowadays, the horror of recurrent femicide stimulates dutiful and bitter reflections on the persistence of a vision that pushes men to treat their partner as their property, as a slave over whom they claim a sort of right of life and death. Thus a paradoxical phenomenon occurs: it is as if the dominant ideology were invoking the advent of the new man, an idea that it on the other hand, in its inveterate anti-communism, never tires of ridiculing.

Obviously, it is necessary not to lose sight of the natural dimension of man (frailty, passions, etc.). More or less unanimous enthusiasm for the building of a new society can stimulate the underestimation of the natural dimension of man and make us forget that the same more or less choral enthusiasm is a fleeting moment in the context of a process of building the new order that is prolonged, tiring and full of contradictions and passions. It must not be forgotten, however, that the sarcasm reserved for the motif of the new man is the leitmotif of the reactionary tradition of thought and of its murkier currents. In 1883, the very year of Marx's death, in a book whose title (*The Race Struggle*) polemicized with the theoretician of the class struggle, Gumplowicz founded his social-Darwinism as follows: it was necessary to get rid once and for all of the "vain illusion that the man of our day - the civilized one! - in his nature, in his impulses and needs, in his spiritual capacities and characteristics, he would be different from his original condition"; "Man has remained man", he "has never been more of a beast than he is today"; yes, "men are always the same" (Gumplowicz, 1883, pp. 105-6 and 349). Hitler argued no differently: given the unchangeable nature of man, the law of the fittest was destined to dominate the

animal world as well as the relations between peoples and races.

Marx and Engels and the political movement that took its cue from them took the opposite attitude. It is true, enthusiasm for the new world to be built has sometimes clouded the lucidity of judgment to the point of losing sight of the complexity and long times of certain historical processes: the times of moral change are longer than those of political transformation. The fact remains that, by agitating the motif of the new man, Marx, Engels and the communist movement radically questioned social relations which were based on the most brutal oppression and which were nevertheless passed off by the dominant ideology as natural and eternal.

Development of the productive forces: a new utopia turned upside down?

By an ever wider public opinion, the new man is directly or indirectly evoked and invoked even when the new relationship to be established with nature is evoked and invoked. There is no doubt that nowadays man feels responsible or is called to feel responsible for the consequences that his behaviour causes on the environment, as a producer and consumer, and even as a user of leisure time: even a reckless and incomprehensible mass tourism can be devastating for the environment. The change that has taken place is radical, and it affects not only the way of thinking and the way of thinking but also the emotions and the way of feeling. Far from being enthusiastic about the grandiose spectacle of the Bernese Alps, the young Hegel considered it fundamentally boring;

in any case, that vision impelled him not to the celebration of a pacifying beauty but to considerations on the hard struggle that man, in order to ensure his survival, was forced to wage against a grim nature (in Hoffmeister, 1936, pp. 234-6). Madame de Staël posed in an even more radical way, who, according to her biographer, preferred her Parisian home and "the drainage ditches in the rue de Bac" to "Lake Geneva" and the "Alps" (Herold, 1981, p. 251). There is no doubt about it: this way of seeing and feeling is a thing of the past. What has happened in the meantime?

An essential role has been played by the prodigious development of the productive forces. Thanks to it, it no longer makes sense to look at an alpine landscape as a world of scarcity and misery, a world which, given its remoteness from places of socialization and the spread of education and culture, impoverishes social relations themselves and makes the development of human individuality very difficult or impossible. The new man in fact evoked and invoked by the ecological movement, the new man who respects forests, woods, prairies, alpine landscapes rather than transforming them into agricultural land destined for the production of food, who respects fauna or rare species rather than cutting them down in order to enrich his diet and clothing, The new man, who has developed a completely different sensibility of the urban and rural landscape than in the past, could not even be conceivable without the development of the productive forces.

The ecological movement is not aware of this, and sometimes adopts the denunciation dear to conservative circles, according to which the communist utopia easily or invariably turns into an inverted utopia or a dystopia. As is well known, Marx calls us to go beyond the capitalist system, in order to achieve an order characterized not only by a more equitable distribution but also and in the first place by a greater development of the productive forces

and social wealth. But now a leading exponent of the ecological movement quotes and paraphrases the famous attack of the Communist Manifesto, but to turn it against itself: "A specter is haunting the world, that of its imminent end" and "it is now evident that our planet will not be able to withstand unlimited growth." On the contrary: will it be possible to "avert the increasingly plausible end of our world"? (Caillé, 2013, pp. 1, xxxii and 2).

Given these assumptions, the powerful development of social wealth promised by Marx as a result of the construction of a post-capitalist society is the most frightening of upside-down utopias, the one that entails the end of the world or, at least, of the human species. To avoid the apocalypse, all that remains is to liquidate Marx and his theory of the development of the productive forces and social wealth. Those who argue in this way would do well to re-read the Critique of the Gotha Programme. This very short text opens with a warning that sounds prophetic today: however great and growing the productivity of labour may be, it "is not the source of all wealth". We must never lose sight of a central point: "Nature is the source of use-values (and of these values consists real wealth!) as well as labour, which in itself is only the expression of a natural force, human labour-power" (Mew, 19; 15). That is, there is full consonance between two apparently contradictory watchwords: development of social wealth on the one hand, respect for nature on the other. And there is full consonance for two reasons: the destruction or drying up of natural resources is synonymous not with an increase but with a shrinking of social wealth; Secondly, polluting and unhealthy the environment also means compromising that resource and "natural force" which is "human labour-power" and which alone makes possible the development of productive forces and social wealth. Capitalist destruction of the productive forces and capitalist destruction of human resources are closely intertwined, indeed they are one.



"The greatest productive force" is the proletariat, the proletariat, the proletariat, the proletariat,

"revolutionary class itself" (ibid., 4; 181); Forcing workers to die early, as a result of overwork and a life of hardship or a degraded environment, also means undermining social wealth.

In addition to the philosophical level, the consonance between the two watchwords (development of the productive forces and respect for the environment) can also be verified on the historical level. It is worth comparing two traditions of thought. In liberal England, Malthus (and in his wake many other authors including Tocqueville) invited the subaltern classes to resign themselves: misery was the inevitable consequence of the scarcity of natural resources and the intervention of the political power they invoked would be useless or counterproductive. On the other hand, in 1843 another liberal author, Herbert Spencer (1981, p. 244), thus mocked those who called attention to the growing pollution and the need for some kind of public remedy: if the state is given the task of intervening against the polluting discharges of industries, why deny it the competence of the "spiritual health of the nation"? Two years later we see Engels drawing an impressive balance sheet of the environmental disaster caused by capitalist industrialization and, in 1848 and in the Communist Manifesto, calling together with Marx for the overthrow of the capitalist system in order to build a new social system characterized by the unprecedented development of social wealth. That is to say, on the liberal side, highlighting the scarcity of natural resources does not go hand in hand with respect for the environment; On the other hand, the pathos of the productive forces in no way precludes the understanding of the ecological question.

But are natural resources really as limited as the champions and prophets of "degrowth" claim? There is no doubt that, up to this point, historical development has

proved Malthus wrong: the sharp increase in population has not prevented an even sharper improvement in the standard of living and a very substantial increase in life expectancy. And it is a lengthening that was accentuated in the twentieth century (see below, p. 116), the century perhaps more than any other characterized by the cult of growth, which should have been a source of misfortune. The environmentalism that today proclaims the dogma of the limitation and even the depletion of natural resources ends up establishing or reaffirming that clear separation between man and nature that it claims to want to overcome; it ignores the resource and "natural force, human labour-power" of which the Critique of the Gotha Programme speaks. Always essential, this resource now plays a growing and increasingly important role, as Marx foresaw in another of his works, to be exact in the Grundrisse: the famous Fragment on Machines evokes the prospect of an unprecedented development of the productive forces, due to the fact that "general scientific work" and "general social knowledge" have become an "immediate productive force" of immense potential (Marx, 1953, pp. 587 and 594). That being the case, it is nonsense to talk about the depletion of natural resources. The natural resource that has now become decisive in the field of the Knowledge Economy is by definition inexhaustible, and a society marked by "degrowth" or stationarity would be an intrinsically sick society, incapable of producing or exploiting the cognitive potential inherent in a society in which the diffusion of education is becoming increasingly massive. Well-promoted and well-guided, "general social knowledge" can be the driving force behind environmental clean-up and sustainable development.

All this does not mean that in the course of the historical process dramatic ecological crises cannot be produced: there is no Providence that guarantees the pre-established harmony between the consumption of resources and their

production and reproduction. Political power may well have to intervene in order to discourage (and if necessary prohibit) certain types of production and consumption and to encourage others. But all this has nothing to do with waiting for the "increasingly plausible end of our world." Such waiting is not something new. At the end of the nineteenth century it was the order of the day: the belief was widespread, also shared by such different personalities (a philosopher strongly interested in science like Engels and a poet like Giosuè Carducci), of the imminent end of humanity following the arrival of a new and fatal ice age, with the consequent lack of the heat necessary for the preservation of life. It is good to remember this chapter in the history of ideas, not to cast doubt on the seriousness of today's ecological crisis. No, this crisis must be kept constantly in mind, but this does not mean that we must lose sight of the fact that the expectation of the end of the world refers to the history of religions and recurrent more or less religious beliefs. In the final analysis, it is the (religious) expectation of the end of the world that founds the thesis that the development of the productive forces and social wealth has in our days been irremediably overturned into a catastrophic dystopia or inverted utopia.

The "steady state" and "degrowth" as an upside-down utopia

Like liberalism, today's environmentalism often seems to lack the capacity for self-reflection: it denounces the reversal of utopia into an upside-down utopia but does not ask itself whether this dialectic does not manifest itself within it as well. The implacable critic of "unlimited growth" (and, indeed, of growth as such) that we already

know expresses a boundless view for <ammirazione> John Stuart Mill who, in *The Principles of Political Economy*, argues for a society finally free from the obsession with development and happy in its "steady state" (Caillé, 2013, pp. 31-3). The work mentioned and celebrated here saw the light of day in 1848. These were the years in which, following a disease that destroyed the potato crop, out of a total of 9 million inhabitants, Ireland lost almost a third, 2.5 million to be exact: half emigrated to Canada and the USA, the other half died of starvation. At about the same time, another colony of Great Britain, India, was struck by a similar tragedy, a famine so terrible that, as an English author candidly observed, "the British residents ... They are forced to suspend their usual evening trips, because of the stench of corpses, too numerous to be buried." Nor are there any prospects for improvement for these trips: "the cholera and smallpox that subsequently arose mowed down a multitude that had survived the famine"; it is a further inconvenience to the vacations and leisure of the elites (Martineau, 1857, p. 297). Let us now turn our attention to the metropolis, to the country which has subjugated Ireland and India: for the workers of London, Manchester, etc., for the subaltern classes as a whole, the situation, though not as hopeless as it is for the wretched of the colonies, is far from comfortable. In the hope of alleviating their misery somewhat, Mill (1981, p. 145) demands that couples who cannot "prove that they have sufficient means to support a family" be banned from marriage. In short, this is the situation prevailing in the British Empire at the moment when the English liberal (or liberal socialist) philosopher points to the ideal of the "steady state": death by starvation on a large scale in the colonies, degrading material misery and forced chastity for the subaltern classes of the metropolis! All this is certainly the result of oppressive political and social relations (capitalism and colonialism) but also of the narrowness of the productive base, a

narrowness for which in certain circumstances the (recurrent) potato disease can be no less devastating than a war of extermination: the ideal of the "steady state", even at the moment it was proclaimed, was in reality an inverted utopia.

The conditions in Ireland and India in the nineteenth century are not very different from those of today's sub-Saharan Africa: even now, in this region of the world, all it takes is one crop gone wrong, whether due to drought or other reasons, to cause a humanitarian catastrophe of vast proportions. At least in that case, it is clear that the problem cannot be solved simply by redistributing social wealth; It must also be increased, and by a great deal. And once again, "steady state" and "degrowth" turn out to be an upside-down utopia.

To be precise, we are dealing with a more general problem. A few months after the outbreak of the 2008 crisis, the FAO released these figures: "More than a billion people - one-sixth of humanity, 100 million more than last year - suffer from hunger. Every 3 seconds a man, a woman or a child dies of hunger" ("La Stampa", June 20, 2009). The picture would have been much bleaker if the People's Republic of China, disregarding the slogans of "steady state" or "degrowth", which were already beginning to echo, had not succeeded in promoting a development that has freed hundreds and hundreds of millions of people from the most abject poverty. However, it is not just a question of hunger and the danger of death by starvation. In a country as emerging as today's India, an immense mass of farmers continues to be without electricity: largely cut off from the surrounding world and the digital world and largely deprived of the possibility of being informed and being able to educate themselves, a very considerable part of the Indian population is in fact forced into hereditary poverty; The caste division itself is strengthened or more difficult to combat. Once again, "steady state" and "degrowth" turn

out to be an upside-down utopia. And, paradoxically, they also turn out to be so on a strictly ecological level: one of the main sources of pollution and environmental degradation is seriously backward agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as the tendency, typical of farmers struggling with the problem of subsistence, to try to escape poverty by transforming wooded areas into cereal or grazing areas.

It is also for this reason that the proposal to turn one's back on communism, which would be obsessed with the problem of the development of the productive forces in order to convert to an ecologically satisfied and happy "convivialism" of the "steady state" and whose political program is summarized by Caillé as follows, is not convincing:

No human being has the right to possess individually a threshold deemed excessive by the sense of common decency. And, symmetrically, no human being should be reduced to extreme poverty, condemned to the abjection of misery. Neither misery, nor plutocracy (Caillé, 2013, p. 54).

To understand how ambitious this program is, keep in mind that in the United States the welfare state is already condemned as a synonym for intolerable violence by Republicans and the most conservative circles. How would the much more radical program we have just seen be received? And would not the implementation of this programme be even more turbulent in a situation characterised by stagnation and degrowth? Finally, are we sure that a country converted to "convivialism" and to the rejection of social polarization between the poor and plutocrats would be tolerated by the current economic, political and military power in force at the international level? From the concrete analysis of the objective situation we are led back to the problems that stimulated the birth of the communist movement at the time.

1 Bukharin (1984, pp. 130-43 and 45); On the "nationalization of the masses," cf. Moves (1975).

2. Ludendorff (1935, pp. 35 and passim); Obviously, the motive of total mobilization refers in a particular way to Ernst Jünger and the text he published in 1930 (*Die totale Mobilmachung*).

3. Paquet (1919, p. 111); Nolte (1987, p. 563) has drawn attention to this author and his use of the category of "totalism".

5. Cf. Losurdo (2005a, pp. 3-9; pp. 152-6), regarding Calhoun and Acton; *ibid.*, pp. 37-9, for Wesley; *ibid.*, pp. 329-32, for attitudes toward Amerinds, African Americans, and Aborigines.

6. See Losurdo (2013, pp. 111-4), for Schoelcher; *ibid.*, pp. 167-9, for Duverger; *ibid.*, pp. 318-14, for China's escape from desperate mass misery.

7. [Here, in the original file, follows a space with four annotations. The first is a memorandum from Losurdo (2015, p. 128); the second concerns a work by Clark, which is later cited. Is the twentieth century the inverted utopia of Marxian communism or of the Wilsonian world without war?" The fourth concerns Popper and the reversal of the "paradise of perpetual peace" into the "hell of neocolonial wars." For the "Wilsonian world without war," cf. Losurdo (2016, pp. 155-83 and pp. 229-47).

## 2. Liberal Socialism or Communism?

### Marx, Lenin and the Cause of Freedom

We are all the more retraced back to the problems from which the communist movement arose at the beginning of the twentieth century because the acceleration that the historical process has been having in recent years is evident: the contradictions that in their intertwining could lead to a new great historical crisis are thickening and worsening. In any case, the objective situation does not cease to press, and it requires not only an in-depth reflection but also choices between different theoretical and practical options. The persistence of the economic crisis that broke out in 2008, the dismantling of the Welfare State in Western Europe itself, the growing social polarization within the advanced capitalist countries, the succession of one war after another and the looming of conflicts on a larger scale, all this makes the need for real change and indeed a turning point felt in an ever more imperious way. But, after the tragic experience of the twentieth century, would it not be time to embrace liberal socialism once and for all and bid farewell to communism, even if it may be giving it the honors that are due to a deceased person to whom some merit must also be recognized? In this way, the ideals of freedom and equality could finally be brought together in an indissoluble synthesis. In the final analysis, this is the argument of a philosophical and political current which, after coming to light at the end of the nineteenth century, experienced its most fortunate season in the period from the advent of



fascism to the years immediately following the Second World War, but which could now perhaps experience a rebirth as a consequence of the crisis of capitalism on the one hand and the discrediting of "real socialism" on the other.

In promoting the synthesis of liberalism and socialism, Bobbio (1991, pp. 26-7) has repeatedly referred to Mill who, in fact, in his Autobiography, defined as "the social problem of the future: how to combine the maximum freedom of individual action with the common ownership of the Earth and with an equal participation of all in the benefits of collective labor" (Mill, 1976, p. 181). However, it is precisely this ancestry that is an indicator of the misunderstandings and limitations that characterize liberal socialism. The English left-liberal is a contemporary of the two authors of the Communist Manifesto, and the main point of contrast between the two schools of thought here is certainly not about "freedom of individual action". If anything, it is Marx and Engels who are more consistent on this point. They draw attention to the destruction of freedom in the 'workhouses' of England at the time, where vagrants and the unemployed, the wretched and their families were locked up to be subjected to tyrannical and arbitrary power; it is a total institution, considered by the inmates to be far worse than the usual prison, but regarded with a certain indulgence by Mill. The latter, in at least one case, proceeds to an explicit theorization of the limitation of freedom (of the subaltern classes): "The laws which in many countries of the Continent prohibit marriage, if the contracting parties cannot prove that they have sufficient means to maintain a family, do not fall outside the legitimate powers of the State"; they "cannot be criticized as violations of freedom". If, in Marx's eyes, Malthus is wrong to reduce the "workers" to instruments of production by condemning them to "celibacy" (mew, 26.2; 112), Mill seems to want to impose on them in the last

analysis chastity and the renunciation of a richer family life, with an undoubtedly heavy interference in an essential sphere of private life.

Above all, beyond the despotism of political power, the Manifesto of the Communist Party intends to contest, as we have already seen, the "despotism" which characterizes the capitalist factory and which can take the most odious forms, so that, as the young Engels observes, for the boss "his factory is at the same time his harem" (ibid., 2; 373). And, therefore, it is a struggle for freedom, as well as <che> for better material living conditions, that the nascent trade union movement is beginning to undertake, encouraged by the two philosophers and communist militants but looked upon by Mill with suspicion: in the eyes of the English liberal, by exercising a "moral police, which sometimes becomes physical", on the occasion of strikes it could violate the freedom of work of the individual worker. It is a position that is all the more one-sided for the moment in which it falls: in 1859 the weight of the legislation banning workers' coalitions was still being felt in Europe, against which a much more formidable "moral" and "physical" police was at work than the one Mill warned against.

Also as far as political freedom is concerned, it is Marx, a proponent of the principle of "one head, one vote", who defends it in a more coherent way, but rejected by Mill who, by pronouncing himself in favour of the plural vote to be granted to the "most intelligent" (in the first place the "employers"), ends up reintroducing through the window the census discrimination kicked out of the door. and therefore by restricting the political freedom of the subaltern classes.

But it is on another terrain that a real antithesis emerges between the two currents of thought we are dealing with here. Mill explicitly claims the "despotism" of the West over the "races" that are still "minor," which are

bound to "absolute obedience": yes, the "direct despotism of the advanced peoples" over the backward ones is already "the ordinary condition," but it must become "general," whether the colonies are located outside or within Europe; Ireland, too, needs "a good and solid despotism." The despotism so emphatically celebrated concerns not only the minor peoples as a whole, but also the individuals who compose them: they must be educated in "daily work" (which is the foundation of civilization); and, in order to achieve this result, when dealing with "the uncivilized races," there is nothing left but to have recourse to the institution of slavery. The political slavery of the colonies is at the same time the slavery of the individuals who inhabit them.

In short, those who, like Bobbio, think of giving more solid foundations to the cause of freedom, grafting Mill-style liberalism onto the trunk of Marxian socialism, are the victims of a blunder: the English liberal or liberal socialist does not seem capable of thinking of freedom in truly universal terms, as demonstrated by the attitude he has taken towards the subaltern classes of the capitalist metropolis and above all the colonial peoples. It is no coincidence that the adherence of not a few workers to Mill's attitude is denounced by Marx and Engels as a capitulation to the ruling class, and to a ruling class placed at the head of "a nation which exploits" a huge colonial empire, not hesitating to exercise "a power of life and death" (*ibid.*, 29; 358 and 12; 286). Proletarians who allow themselves to be seduced by the sirens of colonial expansionism betray the cause of the struggle for emancipation not only from exploitation but also from power relations that are the total negation of freedom.

Does the result of the confrontation between the two currents of thought change with the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and with the advent of Bolshevism? The Bolsheviks formed a party with the

publication in 1902 of *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin's text calls for the fight against autocracy in all its different manifestations; The workers must know how to "react against every abuse, against every manifestation of arbitrariness and oppression, of violence and profuseness, whatever the class affected" (LO, 5; 381). In summing up the 1905 revolution, the Russian revolutionary solemnly declares: "Whoever wants to march towards socialism along a path other than political democracy will inevitably arrive at absurd and reactionary conclusions, both economically and politically" (ibid., 9; 22). Three years later, Lenin reproached the England of the time, the liberal country par excellence, for completely forgetting its proclaimed attachment to the cause of freedom in the colonies: the "natives" were politically "slaves" and, in order to repress the protests of the "native slaves", "the liberal and 'radical' scoundrels" did not hesitate to resort to the harshest and most humiliating "measures of 'pacification'". "including the beating of political demonstrators." On the whole: "The most liberal and radical politicians in free Britain ... they are transformed, when they become governors of India, into true and proper Genghis Khan" (ibid., 15; 178-9). It is worth reflecting on the expression repeatedly used here: it is the "most liberal and radical politicians" who are harshly criticized, including those on the liberal left. They show themselves to be Mill's heirs: they do not question the "absolute obedience" that the people must observe towards the Western masters, who are authorized to exercise "despotism."

With the outbreak of the First World War, it was Lenin who impeached the emergency legislation in force in the capitalist metropolis itself and in fact tolerated even by left-liberals and even, as we shall see, by the exponents of liberal socialism who supported or did not oppose the war. As a result of this, as *State and Revolution* observes in its

Preface, the oppression of "the toiling masses by the State [...] it acquires more and more monstrous proportions." This does not only apply to the trenches and the front line: "the most advanced countries are being transformed - we refer to their 'rear' - into military prisons for workers" (ibid., 25; 363). It is the advent - a later intervention emphasizes - of a generalized "military slavery" (ibid., 27; 393).

Of course, subsequently, the parts are reversed. It is a very broad group, including the non-communist left, that denounces the illiberal practices and terror to which Lenin resorts in a country where the intertwining of international war and civil war and the onset of a process of disintegration and balkanization make the state of exception even more acute and much more prolonged than in the West. But, on the whole, even if we leave aside the colonial question, it cannot be said that it is the lesser or greater love of freedom that constitutes the line of distinction between Lenin and the non-communist left.

We arrive at the same result if we shift our attention from Russia to a country like Italy (where the strongest communist party in the West is developing). After having greeted the October Revolution from its beginnings, and also arguing significantly with the liberal Luigi Einaudi (who would later support the fascist regime for a long time, for a very long time), in September 1918 Gramsci had no difficulty in writing: "The task of the liberals has been taken on by the socialists" on revolutionary and pro-Bolshevik positions (Gramsci, 1984, pp. 285-6). In 1919, writing in the "Ordine Nuovo" directed by Gramsci, Paimiro Togliatti reproached Benedetto Croce and the liberals for having supported the carnage and for having attributed to the State the right to sacrifice millions of citizens on the altar of its vitality and will to power. In this way, "the State is detached from the conscience of individuals [...] The State is once again an abstraction, because it has been

deprived of the concrete support of the moral wills of individuals. A remnant of the ancient transcendence, a shadow of the old god, seems to obscure the clarity of conception." And so a conclusion was necessary: liberalism "was indeed a great thing," but it had "changed its meaning"; Yes, "we don't talk anymore ... of human rights, but of the social order" (Togliatti, 1973-84, vol. I, pp. 40 and 65-6), the social order necessary in order to make possible first participation in the war and then the control and repression of workers' and people's agitation, through recourse to measures that would eventually lead to the establishment of the fascist dictatorship.

What we have just seen is not a youthful attitude of the future secretary of the Italian Communist Party. In 1954, to Norberto Bobbio, who called on socialist countries to be able to make their own even the best liberal heritage, Togliatti replied:

Liberal and democratic upheavals have shown a progressive tendency, which includes both the proclamation of the rights of freedom and the proclamation of new social rights. Rights of freedom and social rights have become and are the patrimony of our movement (ibid., vol. v, p. 869).

If liberal socialism, as its exponents often claim, wants to be the synthesis of the ideals of freedom and social justice, of liberalism and socialism, the Turin philosopher is no more liberal socialist than the leader of the strongest Western communist party (which enjoys enormous prestige within the international communist movement as a whole). Now, however, it is worth looking at the second argument that the second <(Togliatti)> agitates against the first <(Bobbio)>: "When and to what extent have those liberal principles on which the nineteenth-century English state was said to be founded been applied to colonial peoples, a model, I believe, of a perfect liberal regime for those who think like Bobbio?" The truth is that the "liberal doctrine ... it is founded on a barbarous discrimination between human

creatures" (ibid., pp. 866 and 869). The real distinction between liberal socialism and communism was the attitude to be taken towards the colonial question. Rather than denying or devaluing the conquests of which "the liberal and democratic upheavals" had been the protagonists, the communists proposed to universalize them (putting an end to the tenacious exclusion clauses of the liberal tradition) and to assert these conquests also in the materiality of economic and social relations, taking into account the concrete historical and political situation from time to time.

It should be added that, in posing the problem of critically assimilating the high points of the liberal tradition and bourgeois culture, the more mature voices of the communist movement treasured in some way the indication of Engels, who at the end of the nineteenth century had pointed to the proletariat as the "heir of classical German philosophy" (theoretical expression of the French revolution). And they also treasured the lesson of Lenin, who on the eve of the First World War had also identified "German philosophy" as one of the "sources" and "integral parts of Marxism" (Mew, 21; 307; LO, 19; 9-14).

## "Imperialist reaction" and the birth of liberal socialism

If the theme of "inheritance" was at work in the communist movement, in the context of liberalism between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was growing unease with the raging colonial expansionism and imperialism and the evidence of their brutality and barbarism: "we have entered an era of social cannibalism in which the stronger nations are devouring the weaker" - wrote Herbert Spencer in the summer of 1898, Which,

however, in general is not distinguished by its critical spirit towards the existing legal system. It is an observation that sounds like a prophecy: at the beginning of September, with the Battle of Omdurman, Great Britain succeeds in resubjugating Sudan, which had previously defeated the British and won independence. Now the white supermen feel the need to redeem the humiliation they have suffered: they do not limit themselves to finishing off enemies horribly wounded by dum-dum bullets. They devastate the tomb of the Mahdi, the inspirer and protagonist of the anti-colonial resistance: his corpse is decapitated; while the rest of the body is thrown into the Nile, the head is carried around as a trophy. Less than a year later, war against the Boers was raging. To weaken the resistance of these settlers of Dutch origin, liberal Britain imprisoned women and children in concentration camps, where a third of the inmates died (Ferguson, 2008, p. 44). The indignation is all the greater at the fact that in this case it is not a black but a "white" and "civilized" people, that is, the settlers of Dutch origin, who are affected: in England and in Europe, a large public opinion denounces the horror of the concentration camps, the "annihilation of the Boer race" and above all, the "unending death-roll of children" and their "holocaust"; Koss, 1973, pp. 263 and 229).

The colonial question is bursting into Europe itself, with effects that threaten to be devastating. The conflict between supporters and opponents of Home Rule for Ireland brings the United Kingdom to the brink of civil war, with the two opposing parties arming themselves and feverishly preparing themselves even on a military level: it is a test of strength that is thwarted by the arrival of a catastrophe of greater proportions, namely the outbreak of the First World War, A war that is also the outcome of an antagonism, the Anglo-German one, which had already manifested itself and intensified in previous years.



On the other hand, with the founding of the Second International, the influence of socialism and Marxism was strongly felt. It is in this context that we can place Leonard T. Hobhouse, anguished by the advance of "plutocratic imperialism" and "imperialist reaction" in England, as well as by the arms race and the militarization of national life (Hobhouse, 1977, pp. 110-2). It is a "general reaction" that is also felt on the other side of the Atlantic, with the North American republic fully converting to imperialism, as demonstrated by the war against Spain and the annexation of the Philippines. In the capitalist world there is an obsession with "imperial expansion" and the "subjection of the 'colored races' to millions" and "the doctrine that progress depends on the survival of the strongest in the struggle for existence." There is no doubt that everywhere one can see "the reflux of liberal ideas." A murky climate spreads: "humanitarianism is now rejected as sentimentality" (Hobhouse, 1909, pp. ix-xv and 61-2).

It is also for this reason that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Hobhouse felt the need to measure himself against German social democracy (the strongest and most prestigious party of the Second International): although he did not make his own and indeed rejected the calls for "class war" or revolution, he declared himself ready to accept its program in large part (ibid., pp. 239, XXXIV and 211). This is the convergence of "liberalism and socialism" in the construction of a "social democracy." Clarifying his thinking further, two years later, in a book that has been reprinted several times, Hobhouse (1977, pp. 90-1) calls for a "liberal socialism," which should be "founded on liberty" and at the same time be able to "more fully secure social justice" and satisfy the needs of the "great masses of men."

It is not just a question of carrying out radical social reforms in order to improve the living and working

conditions of the working classes. At issue is the political order itself:

The two parties [neoliberal and socialist] are called upon to make common cause against the growing power of wealth which, by virtue of its control of the press and the means of political organization, becomes a growing threat to the proper functioning of popular government (Hobhouse, 1909, p. 239).

Democracy tends to become a sham: "General elections are less decisive than they seem. They decide who is to govern the country, but not how it is to be governed." What is unfolding is "the effective power exercised by the great material interests [...] They now own almost the entire press, which is clearly ceasing to be a representative organ of public opinion" (ibid., pp. xxvi-xxvii).

If the democracy in force in England and more generally in the capitalist metropolis is revealed to be more and more meaningless, the policy that it conducts on the international level is revealing. What characterizes the "new imperialism" are the collapse of the principle of "self-government" and self-determination, the "recrudescence of servile labor," the "rigid claim of racial supremacy and material force" (ibid., pp. 47-9), the recourse to war and to a type of war that knows no limits against colonial peoples. These were the years in which the horror of expansionism began to become evident and intolerable before the eyes of a large public opinion. Hobhouse's denunciation is no less harsh than Lenin's: imperialism "means perpetual war, battles which, when black or yellow are fought, become real massacres" (ibid., p. 47). These were also the years in which the catastrophe caused by the race of the great capitalist powers for the conquest of the planet loomed ever more threatening on the horizon. The illusion which in 1861 impelled Mill to celebrate the British Empire as the champion of the cause of "liberty" and "international morality" and as "a step towards universal peace and

towards cooperation and general understanding among peoples" (Mill, 1946, p. 288) has lost credibility.

Indirect and sometimes direct, the polemic against this view runs deep into Hobhouse's book on the struggle between "democracy and reaction" that I am analyzing here. Yes, the dominant ideology demands that, in the course of its imperial march, "the British flag" will drag with it "British liberty, British justice" and introduce domestically and internationally a legal order of impartiality and incorruptibility that lays the foundations for the spread of a "genuine cosmopolitanism", for the advent of the "world state" and "universal peace" (Hobhouse, 1909, pp. 14-5). In reality, imperialism is the very negation of democracy. "Democratic imperialism is a contradiction in terms [...] In fact, democracy is the self-government of the people, while imperialism is the government of one people by another" (ibid., p. 149).

And as for peace: "Under the reign of imperialism the temple of Janus is never closed. The blood never ceases to flow." And it's not just about colonial wars. Conflicts on a much larger scale are lurking. By now, "the ideal of peace has given way to that of the expansion of dominion." On the basis of the "dangerous jealousies aroused by the march of the British Empire", the arms race developed: "based on imperialism, militarism devoured national resources that could have been used to improve the conditions of the people" (ibid., pp. 28, 4 and 30-1).

Criticizing in advance what would be the ideology of the Entente war during the First World War (and which is still the war ideology of the United States and the West today), the theorist of "liberal socialism" calls into question the thesis that "democracies are not belligerent in themselves." Of course, in the event that they risk being directly affected by the war, the popular masses have an interest in trying to preserve peace with their vote. However, "Suppose a population sheltered from any prospect of compulsory

military service and from any danger of invasion," and the picture changes completely. This is not an imaginary example; the reference is to England, considered even more belligerent than the "continental democracies" (ibid., pp. 144-5).

In conclusion, the dominant ideology tries in vain to embellish imperialism: its slogans are only a "hypocritical discourse" (Ibid., p. 29); far from the "international morality" of which Mill fabled!

Also at the beginning of the twentieth century, in a similar way to Hobhouse and to him, arguing with warmth, another leading exponent of the English liberal left. The judgment on colonialism is reiterated, responsible for unleashing total wars that do not retreat in the face of the killing of the wounded and in fact go as far as genocide. Conducted under the banner of the "mandate in the name of civilization," the expansionism of the great Western powers involves the extermination of "those 'inferior races' which cannot be profitably exploited by superior white colonizers" and the imposition of a more or less disguised slavery on the others (Hobson, 1974, pp. 145 footnote, 175 and 214-5). The conquerors claim to be the champions of the spread of freedom and democracy, but the reality is there for all to see:

The new imperialism did not extend the political and civil liberties of the motherland to any part of the vast territories that after 1870 fell under the rule of the civilized powers of the West: from a political point of view, the new imperialism was an expansion of the autocracy [...] Political liberty, and the civil liberty that depends on it, simply no longer exist for the vast majority of British subjects (ibid., pp. 27 and 102).

The paradox is that democracy ends up being compromised in the capitalist metropolis itself. If we add to the colonial wars "the enmity between rival empires," we can well understand the emergence of a climate of "militarism" and permanent war, and this entails the

"subordination of the legislative to the executive." Yes, "representative institutions are unfit for empire" (ibid.pp. 114, 121 and 127-8). On closer inspection, it is "the great captains of industry and the big financiers" who exercise and promote expansionism (e.g. in the United States), more generally it is a narrow "plutocracy"; And so the struggle for peace must point "the axe at the economic root of the tree" and strike at "the classes that have an interest in imperialism" and that in fact exercise power (ibid., pp. 69, 262 and 83).

Inevitable then is the clash with "a liberal party linked to a policy of militant imperialism" and the "propertied classes" (ibid., pp. 90-1). It must be acknowledged, we are in the presence of "a serious and obvious betrayal". By engaging in a "shameful struggle" in support of and in tow of imperialism, the British Liberal leaders have "sold the party to a confederation of gamblers and chauvinists", have made a total "surrender to imperialism ... and they have 'sold out', have had no beginning, and have happily indulged in any dirty and ignoble defence that an obtuse and forbidden patriotism has been able to invent for them as an excuse" (ibid., pp. 126-7).

## Communism, Liberal Socialism, "Socialism for the People of the Lords"

In order to fully understand the novelty and radicality of liberal socialism, it is necessary to keep it well distinct from a political current to which, if one were to stop at external appearances, it could risk being approached. In order to clarify the problem, let us start from a tendency that was already manifested at the dawn of the socialist movement. Precisely in the years in which Marx and Engels expressed

their youthful hopes for the proletariat as the protagonist of universal emancipation, followers of Fourier and Saint-Simon proposed to build communities of a more or less socialist type on the lands wrested in Algeria from the Arabs, and wrested with a brutal and at times genocidal war. These "socialist" colonists did not intend to question the bourgeois and liberal France of the time, and even less did they propose to promote "the violent overthrow of the entire social order that had existed up to now" <(Marx, Engels, 2003, p. 57)>, with whose invocation the Manifesto of the Communist Party concludes. No, they intend to take advantage of the colonial conquests to transform themselves from proletarians into proprietors, but into owners who collectively own the land wrested from the Arabs. How can we define this "socialism"? By analogy with Herrenvolk democracy, we could speak of Herrenvolk socialism.

Rather than an articulated political program, we are in the presence of a temptation that can present itself in different forms and be more or less strong. Let's take a leap forward in time by more than half a century. Writing in the "Sozialistische Monatshefte", Eduard Bernstein observes with satisfaction:

If in the United States, Canada, South America, certain parts of Australia, etc., today several million men find a living compared to the hundreds of thousands of other times, the credit goes to the colonizing advance of European civilization; and if today in England and elsewhere many tropical products, nutritious and tasty, have become part of the popular consumer goods, if the American and Australian pastures and large fields provide cheap meat and bread for millions of European workers, we must thank the colonial enterprises [...] Without the colonial expansion of our economy, the misery that we still have in Europe today and that we are striving to eradicate would be much more serious and we would have much less hope of eliminating it. Even if we weigh it against the misdeeds of colonialism, the advantage gained by the colonies still weighs heavily on the scales (Bernstein, 1900, p. 559).

The author who expresses himself in this way is one of the great theorists and leaders of the socialist movement between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has certainly not renounced the project of socialist transformation, but for the immediate future he proposes to improve the living conditions of the masses of the people in the capitalist metropolis by plundering the colonies. In this sense, the temptation of Herrenvolk socialism is felt. True, Bernstein (*ibid.*, pp. 559-60) declares that the natives can and should be treated "humanely," but the examples he adduces ("as now in North America, New Zealand, South Africa") are revealing. These were the years in which, in South Africa, "the Christian Boers," in the words of Gumpłowicz (1883, p. 2.49), the theorist and apologist of the "racial struggle," considered and treated "the men of the jungle and the" not as "men" but as "beings" (*Geschöpfe*) whom it is permissible to exterminate as "game in the woods." The treatment of indigenous people "in North America, in New Zealand" is no different. On the other hand, Bernstein pays explicit homage to the "strong races," which inevitably "tend to enlarge and expand with their civilization," while those who oppose useless and retrograde resistance are uncivilized peoples, and even "incapable of civilization"; when they "rise up against civilization," they must also be vigorously fought by the working-class movement (Bernstein, 1896-97, pp. 109-10). In this way, the workers' movement will be able to safeguard the conspicuous "advantage gained by the colonies."

Let's take another leap forward in time a few decades. With reference to Zionism and the kibbutzim it promotes, Arendt (1986, pp. 85-8 and 92) has drawn attention to the presence within this movement of a tendency that at first sight seems singular: it is characterized, on the one hand, by support for "chauvinist" goals, and on the other by a commitment to the pursuit of collectivist experiments and a

"rigorous realization of social justice" within one's own community. Thus emerges an "absolutely paradoxical conglomerate of radical approach and revolutionary social reforms in domestic policy, and of antiquated and completely reactionary methods in foreign policy" in the field of relations with colonial peoples. In this case, Herrenvolk socialism is more than a temptation. As in Algeria at the time of the disciples of Fourier and Saint-Simon, so now in a different area of the Arab world, and in a more systematic way, forms of "socialist" property are taking hold in lands expropriated from a colonial people condemned to deportation or marginalization.

By adopting an attitude which is quite different from Herrenvolk socialism, liberal socialism provokes a reshuffling of positions on which it is good to dwell. Hobson is much closer to Lenin than to Bernstein. The latter, confirming the beneficial character of colonial expansionism, draws attention to the "many tropical, nutritious and tasty products" that in a country like England (with a colonial empire behind it) "have become part of the popular consumer goods". Hobson (1974, p. 212) argues the opposite. Of course, "the taste for tropical agricultural products, such as rice, tea, sugar, coffee, rubber, etc.", is now widespread, but this does not constitute a title of honour for the West: "we moderns want the inferior races to exploit their land to our advantage". If the German Socialist shows the fundamentally benevolent face of colonialism by referring to the "humane" treatment reserved for the natives "in North America, New Zealand, South Africa", the English Liberal Socialist, as a demonstration of the policy of "extermination of the inferior races" carried out by colonialism, cites precisely the "case of the Australian aborigines, the African Bushmen, and the, of the American Indians and Maoris' in New Zealand. If the German Social Democrat has only words of praise for the export of "civilization" of which the colonialist West is said



to be the protagonist, the English liberal socialist points out that the genocide of the natives, in addition to "war and private massacre" (perpetrated by white civil society), can also be carried out "by the forced imposition of a civilization that was in any case destructive to them" (ibid., p. 214). If Bernstein tries in some way to reconcile socialism and colonial expansionism, Hobson (ibid., pp. 44 and 180-1) contrasts "fully socialist state" with "imperialism" and points to the latter as a catastrophe for the conquering power as well: "The greatest danger of imperialism lies in the state of the mentality of a nation which has become accustomed to this deception and which has become incapable of self-criticism."

### Liberal Socialism and Communism: Three Opportunities to Meet (Missed)

It is easy to understand, then, the presence of essential common motifs in the two schools of thought. Hobhouse (1909, pp. xix-xx) scoffs at the claim "of the West—or, rather, of one or two chosen peoples of the West"—to govern peoples deemed backward "for the benefit of civilization" as a whole. One of the most significant definitions of imperialism given by Lenin is that which characterizes it as the claim of "a few chosen nations" to base their "well-being" and their primacy on the plundering and domination of the rest of humanity (ibid., 26; 403), as well as the claim of a few "model nations" to reserve for themselves "the exclusive privilege of forming the state" (ibid., 20; 417).

Despite the obvious differences, the Russian revolutionary looks with deep sympathy at Hobson, whom he credits with having given "an excellent and detailed

exposition of the fundamental economic and political characteristics of imperialism" (ibid., 22; 197). The Russian Bolshevik appreciates the British liberal socialist not only for his scientific analysis of imperialism, but also for his political denunciation of its reactionary implications on the international and domestic levels. Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism just mentioned, dates back to 1917. In that same year Hobson remarked pointedly: "The hasty adherence to patriotism by socialism in every national context in the summer of 1914 is the most convincing testimony to its inadequacy in meeting the task of overthrowing capitalism when the opportunity presents itself" (Hobson, 1917, p. 9). And again the convergence with Lenin emerges, who in his Notebooks on Imperialism acknowledges: "Hobson's book on imperialism is useful in general, but it is useful in particular because it helps to discover the fundamental falsity of Kautskyism on this question", the fundamental falsity of the thesis that tells of a "'healthy', 'peaceful' capitalism, based on 'peaceful relations'" (lo, 39; 87-8). All the conditions for a meeting between communism and liberal socialism seem to be in place, but this does not happen. It's the first but not the last of the missed opportunities.

A second occasion occurs in the wake of <anni> the rise and seemingly irresistible rise of fascism. In Italy, the success of the coup d'état of 1922 stimulated self-critical reflection in Carlo Rosselli, theoretician of liberal socialism: "The lessons of the facts, and in particular the Russian and Fascist experiences, showed us [...] that history does not admit parentheses and unbridgeable sides and that an opposition party must be ready, at certain hours, to come to power." In situations of acute crisis and collapse, the test of strength is in facts, and the Bolsheviks, protagonists of the October Revolution, proved to be not only more decisive but also wiser than the Italian socialists who, taking refuge on the Aventine, paved the way for Mussolini's armed

gangs. On the other hand, the use of violence had been going on for a long time. Even before fascism, the bourgeoisie and reaction had already demonstrated their "bellicose vitality" "with the double war", that is, with the invasion of Libya and with the intervention in the First World War (Rosselli, 1988, pp 109-3-112)

In short, the crisis provoked by the war and the acute social tensions of the post-war period had resulted in the revolution in Russia and in Italy in the counter-revolution.

This in itself forced us to pay attention to an aspect of the social totality (the state of exception), which was mostly neglected by liberal ideologues. The colonialist program of fascism placed at the center of the debate another aspect of the social totality, itself usually neglected. On the occasion of the aggression against Ethiopia, Rosselli underlined the barbarity of fascist violence. It was a page of history of which Italians could only be ashamed and which, however, could be compared to the "black pages of English history" or of other colonialist countries. On the other hand, "weren't empires all made in the same way?" No, no confidence could be had in "capitalist and imperial governments" (Rosselli, 1989-91, vol. II, pp. 337-8, 146 and 2.49).

An alternative to this was Soviet Russia. In the years of the NEP, and in 1923 to be exact, by targeting his comrades in the party and of political orientation, and by polemicizing against those who strove to demonstrate "by a marvellous abundance of quotations, that the Russian Revolution is in flagrant contradiction with the predictions of Marxism" and with "communism" and the ideals of Marx, since it produces a system pervaded by a "new capitalist spirit", Carlo Rosselli observed:

In the reformist judgment and attitude towards the Russian Revolution, the too strict adherence to Marxist formulas has led to the condemnation a priori, almost before it was born, of a

phenomenon that contained and still contains within itself wonderful seeds of life and renewal (Rosselli, 1988, pp. 67-8).

Later, while strongly reaffirming the inalienable value of freedom and democracy, during the years of the Spanish war Carlo Rosselli negatively contrasted the liberal countries ("Official England is for Franco, starve Bilbao") to the Soviet Union committed to helping the Spanish Republic attacked by Nazi-fascism (ibid., pp. 358, 362 and 367). Nor was it just international politics. To a world characterized by the "phase of fascism, imperialist wars and capitalist decadence," Carlo Rosselli contrasted the example of a country that, although still far from the goal of a mature democratic socialism, had nevertheless left capitalism behind and represented "a capital of valuable experience" for anyone committed to building a better society: "Today, with the gigantic Russian experience [...] We have an immense amount of positive material. We all know what socialist revolution, socialist organization of production, means" (ibid., pp. 301, 304-6 and 381). Acknowledging the new world conflict that was looming on the horizon, it was necessary to be clearly aware of the need to defend <the cause> "embodied the<ta> <dal>Russian revolution" and to apply, "limited to fascist countries", the "Leninist thesis" of the transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war (Rosselli, 1989-92, vol. II, pp. 330-1).

Finally, the third and final occasion for the encounter between communism and liberal socialism: in the years immediately following the Second World War, the prestige of the Soviet Union was at its peak, and the decolonization movement resulting from the October Revolution was now an impetuous and unstoppable current. We can then understand the intervention of the British Labour scholar Harold J. Lasky. He certainly and forcefully condemned the dictatorship in the Soviet Union, but immediately added

that the socialist experiment in that country had taken place (and was taking place) in conditions of a "state of siege", imposed at times by the West, proud of its democratic institutions but inclined to make them impossible or difficult to achieve in countries with different social systems. It was also necessary to take note of the persistent colonialism or neo-colonialism in which the West continued to be involved and which reduced entire countries to dependence, for example, on the United Fruit Company of the United States (Lasky, 1948, pp. 40 and 28).

Even if we wanted to disregard both the state of exception (imposed on the country born of the October Revolution) and the colonial question, in order to proceed instead to the usual completely abstract confrontation (but precisely for this reason dear to the dominant ideology) between the West and the Soviet Union, one could not avoid a question: to what extent was the British and American workers free in the factory? And did he really enjoy more freedom in the factory than the Russian worker (*ibid.*, p. 42)? After drawing attention to the state of exception and the colonial world, the Labour MP's analysis brought into play another aspect of the social totality, the distinction between the sphere of circulation and the sphere of production.

Finally. It was not permissible to "keep economy and politics separate" and to detach the political dimension of freedom from its material dimension: there was no authentic freedom without "freedom from want", and freeing from misery and hunger entailed gigantic political and social transformations that required the overcoming of private control of the great means of production. In this sense, the "relations of production" in force in the West were "in contradiction with the productive forces" (*ibid.*, pp. 22 and 36).

In those years, in a manner not very dissimilar to the English Labour Party, Norberto Bobbio behaved, who in

1951 thus impeached the philosophy of history of the liberal West:

History has only one direction, which is the direction taken by white civilization, on the margins of which there is nothing but crystallization, backwardness, barbarism. That there is but one civilization worthy of the name, and that this alone is called to exclusive dominion, is the implicit presupposition and the explicit consequence of the colonial expansion of the last four centuries, which has known no other forms of contact with the different civilizations than extermination (in America), enslavement in Africa, and the invasion of the United States. economic exploitation (in Asia) (Bobbio, 1977a, p. 23).

It is a budget that crudely calls into question the usual self-apologetics of the liberal tradition and of the two countries (Great Britain and the United States) that have mostly embodied it. The fact is that in these years the Turin philosopher did not lose sight of the Indians, the blacks and the colonial peoples as a whole, nor did he lose sight of the connection between their tragedy and the development of the capitalist and liberal metropolis. Of course, the judgment on the "eschatological conception of history" proper to the communist movement is also severe. However, it is not opposed to a more sober vision, but rather to the claim to represent and "defend a civilization that no longer has anything to learn because it represents the fullness of time." Thus we see two opposing eschatologies facing each other, the first of which places the plenitudo temporum in the future and the second, as a realized eschatology, in the present (ibid., pp. 23 and 22).

These two opposing eschatologies both take on a Manichean attitude. By setting itself up as the exclusive representative of civilization as such, the West sets itself up as a champion of the struggle against the surrounding barbarism and regards "the course of human history as its exclusive prerogative." In turn, the socialist camp claims to embody the new and more authentic civilization, which is pressing on an unjust, decadent and doomed world. Thus

we have "two pairs of antitheses: civilization/barbarism, civilization/decadence" (ibid., pp. 21 and 24). From this confrontation between the two opposing ideologies of the Cold War, it is, all things considered, the Western one that comes out the worst: it has recourse to a realized eschatology, which consecrates an unacceptable present; Above all, it stirs up a dichotomy prone to naturalistic (and racist) shifting, since it condemns the adversary as "a world that is not yet civilized, and perhaps never will be" (ibid., p. 21).

Even with all the limitations and dangers inherent in it, the philosophy of Marxist and communist history seems to have a greater universalistic scope, it appears immune from insuperable exclusion clauses. At times, the Bobbio of these years seems to feel its charm, as emerges from this 1954 intervention:

We have left behind decadentism, which was the ideological expression of a declining class. We have abandoned it because we share in the travails and hopes of a new class. I am convinced that if we had not learned from Marxism to see history from the point of view of the oppressed, gaining an immense new perspective on the human world, we would not have been saved. Either we would have sought shelter in the island of interiority or we would have put ourselves at the service of the old masters (Bobbio, 1977d, p. 281).

The highest and most mature expression of modernity, Marxism is not the thought of a single author but "the starting point of a movement of social revolution that is still in progress" and that seems unstoppable: it is not possible to "bring history" back to the past. Anyone who wants to reject Marxism en bloc should know that he is embarking on a quixotic enterprise: "he must retrace the path he has taken so far in four centuries and plunge back into the Middle Ages" (Bobbio, 1977a, pp. 26-7).

At the moment, the judgment on the October Revolution, the protagonist of a radical "transformation of the feudal, economically and socially backward world", is clearly

positive. The result is "a tumultuous and subversive wave" that sooner or later will be decanted and channeled into a more regular course (ibid., pp. 24 and 27). Certainly, as a 1952 speech points out, we are in the presence of "totalitarian regimes", but this cannot be a cause for scandal, because it is a matter of "a hard historical necessity", which weighs heavily on the present but is destined to be overcome (Bobbio, 1977b, pp. 48-9).

As late as 1954, in the course of his polemic with Togliatti, the Italian theoretician of liberal socialism, while insisting, and rightly and with farsightedness, on the indispensability of "formal" freedom and its juridical-institutional guarantees, did not proceed at all to a liquidating judgment on the chapter of history that began with the October Revolution. On the contrary, he points out that the Soviet Union and other socialist states

They have indeed begun a new phase of civil progress in politically backward countries, introducing traditionally democratic institutions, of formal democracy such as universal suffrage and electivity of office, and of substantive democracy such as the collectivization of the instruments of production.

On the contrary, pressed also by the communist leader, Bobbio summarized his position as follows: "We defend a nucleus of institutions [those proper to liberal guaranteeism] that have made a good test and we would like, that's all, to be transplanted into the socialist state as well." And again: we want to "pour a drop of oil into the machine of the revolution that has already been accomplished" (Bobbio, 1977c, p. 164; 1977d, p. 2.80). It was by no means a question of liquidating October, but of further developing and refining a social regime which had already made a great contribution to the process of emancipation of humanity.

Interest and sympathy for the chapter of history that began with the October Revolution were welded with interest and sympathy for anti-colonial revolutions. In



1955, the philosopher was part of the first Italian cultural delegation invited to visit the People's Republic of China, at that time excluded from the UN, banned and opposed in every way by the West and the target of a merciless embargo unleashed by the United States. Even decades later, a clear and sympathetic memory emerges:

The massive popular demonstration in Tiananmen Square for the National Day on October 1 is the most extraordinary spectacle I have witnessed in my life. After a short military parade, the great parade was populated by dancers, acrobats, jugglers. Garlands of flowers and singing women filled the square with colors and graceful movements. From the bleachers we could see Mao Tsetung very well, high up on the stage, with all his staff. I can say, in complete tranquility, that we looked at him with admiration. The "long march" was one of the most astonishing and exciting episodes in contemporary history (Bobbio, 1997, p. 111).

As in Rosselli's time (and, even before that, of Hobhouse and Hobson), even at the time when Bobbio was arguing in this way, there were the prerequisites for a fruitful encounter between liberal socialism and communism. Yes, the Cold War had broken out, but the still vivid memory of the infamies of Nazi-fascism coming to power in countries located in the heart of Europe and defeated with the decisive contribution of the Eastern "barbarians" was not compatible with NATO's Cold War ideology. On the other hand, the clear condemnation of the colonial tradition and its transfiguration in the context of the philosophy of history of the West could not fail to entail a certain sympathetic attention to the country that emerged from the revolution that had raised the banner of the emancipation of the colonial peoples, or to a country like the People's Republic of China that emerged in the wake of the greatest anti-colonial revolution in history.

## Liberal-Socialist Misunderstanding and Communist Responsibilities

Why, then, does the meeting of the two schools of thought not take place? This is not explained by the theory of social-fascism which for some time has been agitated by the Communist International and which obviously plays a fatal role. In the bitterness of the clash between communists and the non-communist left, it is both sides that accuse each other of playing <il> into the hands of fascism and even of being its accomplices. It is the left as a whole that is struggling in the process of elaboration and assimilation of the politics of the united front. When, with its Seventh Congress in 1935, the Communist International finally got rid of the colossal nonsense that put social democrats and fascists on the same level, and called for the formation of a united front against the danger of aggression emanating from the fascist countries, it was Rosselli (1989-91, vol. II, pp. 318-9) who expressed strong reservations in the name of revolutionary orthodoxy: "The traditional Marxist thesis has been set aside and has slipped more and more towards the The thesis of the "democratic war". The present conflict would no longer be the result of an imperialist conflict, but of a conflict between pacifist states (the proletarian state) and fascism, especially German fascism. The Communist Parties, at least "in Russia's allied countries, will be reduced to the union sacrée." That is to say, by re-proposing the thesis of the sacred patriotic union, the Communists made their own the slogan that had been condemned on the occasion of the First World War. In this case, it was the exponent of Italian liberal socialism who did not understand the radical changes that had taken place in the international context: if the First World War was the result of the clash between capitalist and imperialist powers committed against each

other to enlarging their sphere of colonial domination, the Second World War arose from the claim of fascism. In the first place, Hitler's decision was to take up and radicalize the colonial tradition, subjugating and enslaving even peoples of ancient civilization, who were therefore obliged to prepare for an anti-colonial resistance struggle, under the banner of national unity.

In order to understand the reasons for the failure of communism and liberal socialism to meet, it is not on the bumps in the road that we must focus, but on the fundamental theoretical and political questions. It could be said that liberal socialism was born out of a misunderstanding, but from a misunderstanding for which it is not the sole or even the main culprit, from a misunderstanding which, moreover, goes beyond the camp of the liberal socialists and communists. At the beginning of the Cold War, in 1949, Isaiah Berlin, an exponent of classical liberalism, unleashed a hymn to the West in these terms: even if there were areas of misery that hindered "positive freedom" (access to education, health, leisure, etc.), "negative freedom" was guaranteed for all, liberal freedom proper, the inviolable sphere of autonomy of the individual. Five years later, arguing with Bobbio who called on the Soviet Union to finally come to terms with liberalism and its achievements, Galvano della Volpe, at that time perhaps the most illustrious Italian communist philosopher, responded by contrasting the . Berlin published the essay cited here in the American journal "Foreign Affairs," at a time when dozens of states of the Union continued to prohibit by law the sexual and marital contamination of the superior white race with others, thus trampling on the most elementary of "negative freedoms," that of freely choosing one's sexual and marital partner. On the other hand, it was the communists who fought against this legislation and against the regime of segregation and racial discrimination as a whole, and especially in the South of the United States

they were branded as "lovers of blacks" (*libertas minor*, the *libertas major*, which the communist movement was committed to demanding and implementing. *Libertas minor* corresponded to "negative freedom," just as *libertas major* corresponded to "positive freedom." That is, even if they resorted to a different language and judgments of opposing values, Berlin and della Volpe agreed in configuring the clash between the capitalist-liberal world and the communist world as the dispute between liberal freedom and economic-social rights. Despite having a well-established tradition behind them, both authors compared here had a history of torture lovers), therefore prone to racial mixing and contamination of the superior white race, and treated accordingly. An American historian described the courage they were forced to show as follows: "Their challenge to racism and the status quo provok[ed] a wave of repression that one would think unthinkable in a democratic country"; yes, challenging white supremacy meant "facing the possibility of imprisonment, beatings, kidnapping, and even death" (Kelley, 1990, pp. xii and 30). And all this - one might add - only to achieve what, according to della Volpe's scheme, should be considered a *libertas minor*, that is, a set of freedoms that are largely "minor"!

In fact, it is precisely the cause of freedom that drives young people to become communists who then become leaders of the international communist movement. Ho Chi Minh matured his political choice starting from the painful experience of oppression and the condition of total lack of freedom to which French colonialism subjected the Vietnamese people. Speaking on 26 December 1920 at the Tours Congress of the French Socialist Party, which would later join the Communist International, he declared:

More numerous than schools, prisons are always open and frighteningly populated. Any indigenous person who is thought to

have socialist ideas is imprisoned and sometimes sent to death without being judged (in Lacouture, 1967, pp. 36-7).

Perhaps for some time the young revolutionary must <aver> have nurtured some illusions about the United States, which with Wilson, without renouncing its colonies (the Philippines) and the Monroe Doctrine and the related control of Latin America, had tried to give itself an "anti-colonialist" tone, waving the flag of self-determination. However, having landed in the North American republic in search of work, Ho Chi Minh was a horrified witness to a lynching, to the slow interminable torture of a black man witnessed by an amused and cheering crowd of whites. Let us pass over the details and see the conclusion: "On the ground, surrounded by a stench of grease and smoke, a black head, mutilated, roasted, deformed, makes a horrible grimace and seems to ask the setting sun: 'Is this civilization?'" The capitalist and imperialist system deprived the most elementary freedoms and subjected to the most cruel oppression not only the colonial peoples but also the populations of colonial origin, located in the very heart of the capitalist metropolis. The young revolutionary denounced the infamy of the white supremacist regime and the Ku Klux Klan in "Correspondance Internationale" (the French version of the organ of the Communist International; Wade, 1997, PP. 2.03-4).

Even in a very dramatic situation, surrounded as he was by enemies determined to annihilate him, Mao Zedong reserved time and attention to the struggle for freedom led by African Americans, condemned to the enslavement inflicted on them by the country that loved (and loves) to present itself as the oldest democracy in the world: the leader committed to rejecting the plan of enslavement of the Chinese nation cultivated by Japanese imperialism, Emulating Hitler's, "he knew something about the problem of blacks in the United States and made an unflattering

comparison between the treatment of blacks and American Indians and the right policy adopted in the Soviet Union towards national minorities" (Snow, 1967, pp. 88-9). Even if we want to leave aside the cause of freedom for the colonial peoples (but this would be inadmissible on both the epistemological and moral levels), there is no doubt that in countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, the communist parties developed by putting themselves at the head of the struggle against the cancellation of democratic freedoms perpetrated by fascism and already largely carried out by the emergency legislation passed on the occasion of the First World War.

How, then, can we explain the fact that, despite being engaged in decisive battles for freedom, the communists have often downgraded the freedom they defended to a merely "formal" freedom, even to the sacrifice of their lives? The freedom of the liberal West can and should be criticized from a number of angles. Despite the grandiloquence with which it is proclaimed, it is characterized by appalling exclusion clauses, primarily to the detriment of colonial peoples (or peoples of colonial origin), who are regularly deprived of even the most elementary civil liberties and often subjected to decimation and annihilation. At least as far as political freedoms are concerned, it has long been the lower classes and women who have been affected by the exclusion clauses. If, then, we shift our attention from the sphere of circulation to that of production, we see that the "despotism" of the bosses in the factory, denounced by the Manifesto of the Communist Party, has not disappeared: on the contrary, it worsens in times of crisis, when the dismissal decided by the owners can mean the condemnation to starvation. It should be added that in all situations of crisis, whether internal or international, liberal liberty is easily transformed into despotism. Finally, there is no freedom that excludes social and economic rights, which nowadays are contested even

on a theoretical level by the neoliberal reaction. Great is the intellectual effort required to understand the multiple limits of liberal freedom: it is easier and quicker to dismiss it en bloc as *libertas minor* and "formal" freedom. In this way, however, communist theory enters into a glaring contradiction with communist praxis, but it is undoubtedly the latter that proves to be more enlightened.

The elaboration of the Marxist and communist theory of freedom was made even more difficult by the expectation of the extinction of the state after a short period of transition: confronted with the exhilarating prospect of the disappearance of power as such, the limitation of power through the rule of law, through the rule of law, could only appear as a *libertas minor*, in any case, destined to disappear together with the State. It is from here that we must start to understand the misunderstanding of liberal socialism, which believed it was making up for the presumed deafness of communism to the ideal of freedom, suggesting a synthesis between liberalism and socialism and identifying the former (apologetically) with the cause of freedom and the latter (in a reductionist way) with the cause of social justice.

## The Basic Limits of Liberal Socialism

However, on closer inspection, the misunderstanding is not long in coming. It is better to start with Piero Gobetti. He draws attention to the "workers' problem, the problem par excellence" of "our century" (of the twentieth century), pays homage to the "grandiose movement of the workers' councils", but never goes so far as to criticise colonialism and imperialism: Francesco Crispi's Ethiopian adventure is criticised, but only because "imperialism is naïve when the

elementary problems of existence remain to be solved" (Gobetti, 1983, pp. 114, 105 and 29). At times a similar attitude can be read in Rosselli (1989-92, vol. II, p. 190), when he summarizes in these terms the arguments to be opposed to the imperial propaganda of fascism: Ethiopia cannot be "a colony of population", but "a colony of exploitation", however, "to exploit it requires large capitals that Italy does not have today, and even more so will not have tomorrow after the expenses of war".

The same considerations also apply to the most prominent exponent of Italian liberal socialism at the end of the Second World War and in the years immediately following. Writing between 1944-45, Guido Calogero (1972, pp. 126 and 128) affirms that the "modern liberal socialism" with which he identifies himself "is now a century old." That is, he takes his cue from Mill, the singer of the Opium Wars and the theoretician of the beneficent "despotism" that the West was called upon to exercise over the "races" that were still "minor." There is clearly no awareness of the colonial question, as confirmed by the homage paid to the "community of British nations" at a time when the struggle for independence was raging in India, which was harshly fought by the colonial authorities, who sentenced Gandhi to prison and "resorted to extreme means, such as the use of aviation to strafe crowds of demonstrators" (Torri, 2000, p. 598).

If we now turn our attention backwards to England, the country that saw the first emergence of liberal socialism, we can see that authors such as Hobhouse and Hobson were indeed substantially immune to the imperial enthusiasm that also infected the Labour Party, and yet, at least as far as the former is concerned, there is no lack of fluctuations. The liberalism he advocated, he wrote three years before the outbreak of the First World War, was "not indifferent to the interests of the Empire as a whole, to the feeling of unity which pervades its white population, to the



opportunities inherent in the fact that a quarter of mankind recognizes one flag and one supreme authority" (Hobhouse, 1977, p. 122).

Although critical of colonial expansionism, both exponents of English liberal socialism were far from thinking that colonial peoples could become active subjects of the revolutionary process. Their anti-colonialism is an invitation to the ruling classes in the West to live up to the moral principles they proclaim and therefore not to commit crimes against the alleged "barbarians", or it is the demand for reform from above. In no case is the anti-colonialism of Hobhouse and Hobson an appeal to colonial peoples to take their destiny into their own hands, as the Bolsheviks do, who call on "colonial slaves" to break their chains and thus set in motion a gigantic wave of anti-colonial revolutions.

We can now attempt a general assessment. Liberal socialism was born out of a self-critical reflection of liberalism, but it was developed more for the social question than for the colonial question. Nazi-fascism wanted to revive and radicalize the colonial tradition, long embodied primarily by liberal countries. And in liberal Italy <this tradition manifested itself, for example, in> those that in the final analysis, according to a distinguished historian, functioned as "extermination camps" for the Libyans detained there (Del Boca, 2006, p. 121). It was the army sent to Libya by an enlightened liberal and reformer like Antonio Giolitti that was guilty of horrendous crimes against humanity and even cultivated the idea of a sort of "final solution" of the Libyan question (Losurdo, 2007, pp. 205-8). And without this precedent it is in no way possible to understand one of the most infamous pages written by Italian fascism, the one relating to the war against Ethiopia, whose resistance is also faced with the use of chemical weapons. It would be in vain to seek a reflection on this connection in Italian liberal socialism. The situation is no different for English liberal socialism. In carrying out

his project of building a continental-style colonial empire in Eastern Europe, Hitler explicitly and repeatedly referred to the colonial policy of two liberal countries. There are two models: the expansion of the United States and the white race in the Far West and the regime of white supremacy, which even after the formal abolition of the institution of slavery continues to inflict on African Americans the fate reserved for the "inferior races"; the British Empire, with its eyes turned in particular to its jewel, the "British Indies". This circumstance could have been the occasion for a definitive reckoning with colonialism, but it did not occur in any way. To show that doubts can be entertained about the self-government capacity of "blacks" and "Kafirs", Hobhouse (1977, pp. 26-7) cites "the American experience of blacks". These were the years in which the terror deployed by white racism raged: imprisoned in the lower segments of the labor market and subjected to servitude, African Americans became the target of lynchings that were an interminable torture and that precisely for this reason also served as a horrendous mass spectacle; These were the years in which the racial state was in full force and ignited Hitler's enthusiasm. As an example of a "world state of a not impossible future," Hobhouse (ibid., p. 121) cites the "free, complete and satisfactory national self-government" enjoyed by Canada and Australia. It is a self-government which, especially in the latter case, enables the colonists, now rid of all obstacles from the central power, to proceed rapidly to the decimation or extermination of the natives. It is a dialectic that the author highlights well in relation to South Africa but ignores when it comes to other colonies. In any case, if we keep in mind the fate reserved for the natives, we can better understand the reasons for the fascination that the British Empire exerts on Hitler.

In the light of the lack of a reckoning with the colonial question, it is not surprising that liberal socialism has uncertainties and vacillations in the face of the First World

War, an attitude that is quite different from that of Lenin. Hobhouse (1921, pp. 6-7) fully embraces the ideology of the Entente war, interpreting the gigantic conflict as a crusade that the heirs of the "rational humanitarianism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" are waging against a country poisoned by the "metaphysical theory of the state" and the "Hegelian theory of the God-state". A similar observation can be made with regard to Gobetti (1983, p. 30): "The spirit of the war was in fact popular and severe, it marked for the peasants of the South the first test of unitary life." Albeit in a more sober language, the ideology that was widespread at the turn of the war re-emerges, celebrating the immense test of strength and the sacrifice and readiness to sacrifice human life as a "furnace of fusion", as an instrument for overcoming the lacerations of the class struggle and therefore as an instrument for the "regeneration of present social life" and for the "purification of men": it is the vision against which Gramsci polemicizes with fiery words when he arrives at communism (cf. above, p. 40). Compared to the other liberal socialist exponents, Hobson, who we saw in 1917 criticizing the chauvinism of the parties of the Second International, is much more detached. He expresses reservations and criticisms already at the moment of the outbreak of the war, but without going beyond a sighing tautology: ah, if an "international government" had been at work (this is the theme that gives the book the title here), there would not have been the terrible conflict between the nation-states that broke out in the summer of 1914! No mention is made of the colonial dispute, but rather the project of a joint exploitation by the great powers, for the "benefit of humanity", of the resources not profited by countries and peoples stuck at a backward stage of development (Hobson, 1915, pp. 139-40). There is no place in this framework for the revolutionary protagonism of the colonial peoples, nor for the appeal addressed to the

sacrificial victims of the carnage to disobey and rise up: this is the real divergence with respect to Bolshevism and Communism.

### Bobbio contra Hobhouse: liberal socialism as an escape from conflict

Before proceeding further in the analysis of the two currents of thought compared here, it is necessary to draw attention to another fundamental difference: starting with the October Revolution (or, if you like, starting with the formation of Bolshevism with Lenin's publication of *What Is To Be Done?*), albeit between ups and downs and between very strong fluctuations, The communist movement makes its presence felt uninterruptedly on a world level. Liberal socialism, on the other hand, manifests itself intermittently, especially in moments of the most acute political and social crisis (the raging of colonial expansionism and imperialism; the looming of the First World War; the march of Nazi-fascism; after the catastrophe, the urgency of the construction of an order capable of unraveling the roots of imperialism, war and fascism), and often pressed by the socialist and communist movement. The geographical scope of diffusion is also decidedly more limited: it is mainly two countries, Great Britain and Italy.

It is in the first that liberal socialism assumes its theoretically most mature form. In Hobhouse's view, the link between politics and economics stands out in the first place: "the man who dies of hunger" is subjected to a "constraint" that mutilates or nullifies his freedom; A distinction must therefore be made between 'apparent freedom' and 'real freedom' (Hobhouse, 1909, pp. 216-7). And therefore: "The masses of the people are not fully free

to exercise their political rights if they are subjected to working conditions which oblige them to spit blood [...] The social question must be considered as a whole" (Hobhouse, 1977, p. 126). Even more relevant is the tendency to be aware of the possible emergence of the conflict of freedoms.

However, this is a motif that is widespread in liberal socialism as such. Attention must therefore be focused on a different aspect, which seems to me to be much more significant. This is how Hobhouse rejects traditional liberal critiques of the activity of the most militant workers' unions: it is true, "syndicalism implies coercion and, to this extent, violates the freedom of the individual" (think of workers' pickets). And yet, "the freedom that syndicalism sacrifices is less important than the freedom it provides": it serves effectively to counteract the "inequality" of the balance of power between employers and workers, who are clearly disadvantaged and are therefore condemned to a condition of substantial "unfreedom" (Hobhouse, 1909, pp. 119-10). And so, it is not necessarily freedom and despotism that clash, as is the case in the realm of classical liberal theory; Freedom and freedom, which are not equivalent to each other, can also clash.

The conflict of freedoms plays<a> an even more important role when we analyse the relationship between the capitalist metropolis on the one hand and colonial peoples or peoples of colonial origin on the other, as well as international relations as a whole. Here is what happened in South Africa in the years immediately following the Anglo-Boer War: "In the tangle of human affairs, the principle of autonomy is invoked in defense of the unlimited right of a small oligarchy of planters to treat blacks at home as they please" (ibid., pp. xxiii-xxiv). The self-government of the white community went hand in hand with the imposition of a regime of oppressive white supremacy. It is the dialectic that had presided over the

war of independence of the American colonists against the government in London. The freedom of civil society, which is dominated by whites and has won self-government, can go hand in hand with the oppression of ethnic minorities and even their decimation and annihilation (as in the case of the Indians).

Nor does the granting of political rights to blacks remedy the conflict of freedoms:

When an oligarchy of white farmers is established among a black population, it is legitimate to ask whether extending the right to vote to the black population is the best way to ensure justice. It may happen that, because of the economic and social conditions in which he lives, the "coloured" man is obliged to follow the directives of his master, and if we are to guarantee fundamental rights to all, it may well be that a semi-despotic system, such as that in force in some of the Crown colonies, is the best (Hobhouse, 1977, p. 120).

In order to oppose the "free" self-government of a white community, determined to impose a regime of white supremacy, the English liberal socialist does not hesitate to invoke a "semi-despotic system". In any case, in order to define a country as democratic, it is necessary to take into account not only the institutions in force within it, but also the relations it has with other countries:

Until yesterday, it seemed impossible to oppose the supreme "destiny" that gave the white races the task of dominating the rest of the world. The result would be that, no matter how developed democracy within a Western state, its relations with the colonies would be characterized by an opposite principle. This contradiction, as a student who carefully observes our political constitution can easily see, is a permanent threat to national liberty.

Independently of its relationship with the colonial world proper, a general principle applies: "A nation cannot be said to be fully free if it fears another nation, or if it allows itself to be feared by it." In any case, the ideal of freedom cannot be separated from the principle of "international equality" and the critique of the "imperial" or imperialist idea (ibid., pp. 126 and 122). Just as at the level of a single

country it is necessary to take into account not only the compulsion sanctioned by law but also that exercised by hunger, so at the international level, together with colonial rule proper, it is necessary to take into account the domination imposed by the exhibition of force and the threat of recourse to force. In the light of these considerations, Great Britain, the free country par excellence in Europe, was not in fact 'fully free', since it was feared by a country like China, for example, and systematically trampled underfoot the principle of 'international equality'. While Hobhouse may not have drawn all the consequences from his theoretical premises, it is nevertheless clear that they radically challenged the traditional framework of liberal theory.

Even in its best moments, Italian liberal socialism failed to rise to the vision of the multiple and contradictory aspects of the problem of freedom and the possible conflict of freedoms. This fact is not primarily explained by the subjective limitations of this or that author. A different circumstance is more relevant. Situated as he was at the centre of the British Empire, Hobhouse had no difficulty in understanding that the rule of law in the capitalist metropolis in no way excluded the despotism exercised over colonial peoples; Albeit with vacillations and contradictions, he could also observe that the self-government granted to the white colonies went hand in hand with the intensification of oppression against the natives. Italian liberal socialism was relegated to a more "provincial" position, which made it inclined to transfigure Great Britain as the embodiment of freedom and to resort to a binary logic, incapable of understanding the "tangle" of relationships and contradictions that characterizes social reality and to which we have seen Hobhouse refer.

Rivelatore is a 1994 excerpt that the Turin philosopher takes up a few years later in HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY and

which summarizes the attitude to be taken towards liberalism and socialism as follows:

It seems to me that we walk with our feet a little more on the ground if, instead of the two isms, we talk about freedom and equality [...] If we want to say that the two problems refer the first to the liberal doctrine, the second to the socialist doctrine, let us say so. But I recognize myself better, even emotionally, in the motto: "Justice and Freedom" (Bobbio, 1997, p. 47).

Binary logic celebrates its triumphs here: liberalism corresponds to freedom and socialism to equality; Here are the two ideals and the two traditions of thought that it is now a question of combining. History has vanished, with its interweaving of contradictions. Is liberalism synonymous with freedom or attachment to the ideal of freedom? From this picture disappeared the enslavement of blacks (and the subsequent recourse to Indian and Chinese coolies), the expropriation, deportation and decimation of the natives, the subjugation of colonial peoples and the forced labor and genocidal practices carried out against them. There is also little room for the multiple dimensions of freedom to which Hobhouse refers. If freedom from the material "constraint" of hunger and misery is in any way evoked by reference to the ideal of "justice", there is no mention of freedom from the threat of aggression, the freedom considered essential by the English Liberal Socialist. And, in any case, freedom, understood above all as the enjoyment of the rule of law, is called upon to incorporate to a certain extent the ideal of equality. However, even this second ideal is curtailed in Bobbio: reference is made to the commitment to avoid social polarization within a single country, but not to the commitment to achieve "international equality" of which Hobhouse speaks once again.

Both amputated and impoverished, in Bobbio freedom and equality can never contradict each other. And once again the theoretical poverty and provincialism of this



model compared to the one sketched by the English liberal socialist are striking. Above all ignored is Adam Smith's great lesson. Referring to the situation of the English colonies on the eve of their revolt against the government in London, he observes: slavery can be more easily abolished under a "despotic government" than under a "free government," with its representative bodies reserved, however, exclusively to white proprietors. In this case, the condition of black slaves is desperate: "Every law is made by their masters, who will never let pass a measure that is detrimental to them." And so: "The freedom of the free man is the cause of the great oppression of the slaves [...] And since they constitute the largest part of the population, no person endowed with humanity will desire freedom in a country where this institution has been established" (Smith, 1982, pp. 451-3 and p. 182). That is, in certain historical situations there is what we might call a conflict of freedoms. One is forced to choose between two freedoms, both of which are essential: the emancipation of black slaves could not be achieved without the cancellation, even if temporary, of the self-government of the Southern states, which enslaved blacks. In fact, many decades later, slavery was abolished only after a very bloody war and the subsequent military dictatorship imposed by the federal government on the secessionist and slave states. When the Union renounced its iron fist, whites were once again granted local self-government (and habeas corpus), but blacks were not only deprived of political rights again, but subjected to a regime that involved apartheid, semi-servile labor and lynching, and which in practice also deprived them of negative freedom.

Ignoring the possible conflict of freedoms, Bobbio's liberal socialism takes the form of an escape from conflict and, ultimately, from history. In this regard, it may be interesting to compare the Turin philosopher no longer with the liberal socialist Hobhouse, but with an American

liberal author. He demands the primacy of freedom over equality, that is, in a different language, of negative freedom over positive freedom, but he adds that this primacy applies only "beyond a minimum level of income" (Rawls, 1982, p. 441). That is, in the Third World, the need to ensure the survival of the poorer classes (which constitutes an essential, "positive" aspect of freedom) remains the primary objective, even when it comes into contradiction with other, "negative", but still essential, aspects of freedom. Unfortunately, in this case too, there is no mention of freedom as the absence of fear or risk of aggression, nor of "international equality", that is, no mention of the international dimension of the problem. And yet, the conflict of freedoms somehow ends up emerging. In promoting the escape from conflict and history, Bobbio is undoubtedly more consequential.

### From escaping conflict to delegitimizing anti-colonial revolutions

Escape from conflict is the removal of the colonial tradition in the first place and the reading of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as if slavery, subjugation and colonial wars had never existed. Revealing is a text on which it is worth dwelling at length. We are in 1986: Bobbio does not consider the self-criticism of the Italian communists sufficient for the support provided, thirty years earlier, to the Soviet invasion of Hungary. No, these are not simple "mistakes", as the leaders of the PCI would have us believe. It is the chapter of history that began in October 1917 and it is a whole vision of the world that must be denounced and liquidated:

Had not Machiavelli already said that when the salvation of the fatherland is at stake (the less sublime goal of the liberation of the whole of humanity) "one must have no consideration of either just or unjust, neither pitiful nor cruel, neither praiseworthy nor ignominious"? Or had he not maintained that the founder of states, the "hero", who in the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist, and even Gramscian, doctrine, becomes a collective hero, the party, is not bound to respect the laws that bind the ordinary mortal and, "irresistibly impelled to do his work" (allow me to emphasize that "irresistibly"), all that he gives is good, And do the others, ordinary men, bend, even without being fully aware of it, to His will? (Bobbio, 1990a, pp. 114-5).

The crimes of communism are already inscribed in his philosophy of history, denounced by the Turin philosopher as a synonym for the perversion and liquidation of morality: the more sublime and radiant the picture drawn of the inescapable future, the more easily it functions as an instrument of legitimization of "non-noble or even ignoble means"; The proclaimed historical necessity delegitimizes and ridicules any moral scruple that might pretend to stand in the way of the achievement of the "predetermined ultimate end" (communism). It is the triumph of the "maxim that the end justifies the means." And so, in order to redeem themselves, communists or ex-communists must finally "recognize as a lie that conception of the party, of politics, of history that has made them what they were and that today they can no longer be" (ibid., pp. 114 and 116).

In the article cited here, the silence on the Anglo-French-Israeli war against Nasser's Egypt is deafening. Yet, it is contemporary with the Soviet invasion of Hungary. On the contrary, these are two events that condition each other and that in their intertwining, while the Cold War is raging, provoke "the gravest alarm that the world has known since the end of the Second World War" (Fontaine, 1968, vol. II, p. 295). Is the colonial war in the Middle East less serious than the invasion with which the USSR seeks to reassert its Monroe Doctrine in Eastern Europe? Is the first event less immoral and less "Machiavellian" than the second? France (which controls the Maghreb and is committed to

liquidating the Algerian revolution by all means) and Great Britain (which has a strong presence in the Persian Gulf and is determined to maintain control of the Suez Canal) are pushing Israel (whose expansionist vitality is already evident) to attack Egypt. After that, the two old European colonial powers, posing as intermediaries, bomb the attacked country. It is a "pitiful masquerade", a "comedy is staged with such bad faith as to verge on naivety" (ibid., p. 280). There is no turning back in the face of anything in order to liquidate Nasser's Egypt, which has become the reference point for anti-colonialist and independence movements in the Middle East. It is true, on that occasion, Washington is taking sides against the protagonists of the "pitiful masquerade". However, the delay in his speech has led some to argue that the U.S. has "set a trap for its allies by letting them act, if not secretly encouraging them, in order to replace its imperialism." It may well be that this suspicion is the result of "imagination" (ibid., p. 281). However, two facts remain. The first: the affair ended with the launch, on March 9, 1957, of the Eisenhower doctrine - "the general area of the Middle East" had now become "vital" to American "national interests"; it is the transfer from Great Britain to the United States of control of an area of decisive strategic importance. The second fact: the behavior of the West as a whole, the suspicions about the United States and the results objectively achieved by the latter country, all this makes the scheme that is dear to Bobbio and which con-(l affix the Machiavellian communists to the Western guardians of morality appear somewhat naïve, if not ridiculous. To speak calmly of "American Machiavellianism" is even a historian committed to theorizing explicitly the beneficial and necessary character of the "Empire" directed from the White House (Ferguson, 2005, p. 119).

The silence on the Suez adventure is not the only manifestation of the tendency to remove the colonial

tradition that deeply pervades Bobbio's text quoted above. In reproaching the Communists, and them alone, for the sacrifice of morality on the altar of the philosophy of history and of the inevitability of the historical process, the philosopher does not realize that he is taking up again the criticism addressed by the English Liberal Socialists not to the communist or socialist movement, but precisely to colonial tradition and ideology. We have seen Hobhouse criticize the vision that he called for bowing before "the supreme 'destiny' which gave the white races the task of dominating the rest of the world." In turn, in polemicizing against the American and European prophets of imperialism, Hobson (1974, p. 69) ironically characterizes them as the "party of destiny" and the "civilizing mission."

This characterization is well understood. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the theme of the . Manifest Destiny, or the providential mission with which they feel invested, which leads them to annex vast territories and which further pushes them to control and civilize the entire continent. It is the underlying ideological motive that accompanies the colonial expansion of the West as a whole. Sometimes, in even more emphatic language, instead of "destiny," we speak of "Providence." In Tocqueville's eyes, the planetary domination of Westerners and whites is "clearly preordained in the views of Providence ... Nothing will stand before them on the surface of the earth." The devastating implications of this philosophy of history are particularly clear when the French liberal speaks of the lands inhabited by the Amerindians as an "empty cradle" waiting for the arrival of the European colonists destined, always by virtue of an irresistible decree of "Providence", to occupy them (and to subject them to ethnic cleansing). On the other hand, at least in the case of Benjamin Franklin, the genocidal character of this philosophy of history is unequivocal: "If it is part of the design of Providence to extirpate these savages in order to make

room for the cultivators of the land, it seems to me probable that rum is the appropriate instrument. It has already annihilated all the tribes that formerly inhabited the coast."

In criticizing the theme of the irresistibility of a future already ineluctably preordained by Providence, by destiny or by the objectivity of the historical process, Bobbio completely ignores the colonial tradition and takes aim exclusively at the communist movement, the great antagonist of colonialism, which even in the eyes of English liberal socialism constitutes the main incarnation of a violent and devastating philosophy of history. From this point of view, English liberal socialism is closer to Lenin than to the late Bobbio. For Hobhouse, it is the "political awakening in the East" that has manifested itself "over the last few years", it is the awakening of colonial peoples that refutes the colonialist and racist thesis of the "destiny" that would preside over the planetary domination of the "white races" (Hobhouse, 1977, p. 120). It is a statement that falls in 1911: impatience with the yoke or hegemony of the West is growing in China, India, Persia, Turkey. This agitation and movement are looked at in a decidedly sympathetic way:

The awakening of the East, from Peking to Constantinople, is the most important and promising event of our time, and it is with the deepest shame that the English liberals have been compelled to watch as our foreign minister made himself an accomplice in the attempt to nip in the bud the liberty of Persia, and this in the interests of the most ruthless tyranny that has ever crushed the liberty of a white people. pp. 120-1).

The cause of freedom is not the liberal West, but the peoples in colonial or semi-colonial conditions who are forced to clash against it. If the English Liberal Socialist gives the example of Persia in the first place, Lenin, in addition to Persia (where, in order to divide the country, liberal England allied itself with Tsarist Russia in

supporting "reactionaries" and "the advocates of absolutism" as well as "the Shah's cops"), also focuses on China:

In Asia, a powerful democratic movement is developing, spreading and strengthening everywhere. Hundreds of millions of people are awakening to life, to light, to freedom. And what about "advanced" Europe? It plunders China and in China it helps the enemies of democracy, the enemies of freedom!

Leaving aside the colonies and semi-colonies, where "the profound hypocrisy and intrinsic barbarism of bourgeois civilization stand before us without veils" (according to Marx's judgment), or where even "the most liberal and radical politicians of free Britain ... when they become governors of India, they become real Genghis Khans" (according to Lenin's judgment, Bobbio has no difficulty in concluding: "that little democracy that exists in the world [...] in fact, it exists only in capitalist societies", while regimes that have claimed to construct a different social order have been marked "from the very first moment [by] the establishment of a monocratic power" (Bobbio, 1990b). That would seem to be a sensible and clear line of reasoning. In reality, we are in the presence of a mutilation and distortion of the historical framework. The liberal philosopher avoids asking some elementary and essential questions: why in the nineteenth century did "that little democracy that exist[ed] in the world," Great Britain, impose on Ireland a "religious oppression that surpasses all imagination"? The testimony is from Tocqueville's companion during his journey to America, it is from Gustave de Beaumont, who went on to say that the oppression, the humiliations, the sufferings inflicted by the English "tyrant" on the Irish people, who had become a "slave people", showed that "in human institutions there is a degree of selfishness and madness, the boundary of which it is impossible to define" (Beaumont, 1989, vol. I, p. 331 and vol. II, pp. 306 and 201). And how to explain the

"reign of terror" imposed on India in times of crisis by England, a "reign of terror" compared to which "all the injustices of the former oppressors, Asiatic and European, appeared as a blessing" (Macaulay, 1850, vol. iv, pp. 273-4)? And who inspired the movements that promoted the fight against these infamies? Similar questions and observations could be formulated for the history of the twentieth century: the leading country of "that little democracy that existed in the world" was the protagonist of coups d'état (e.g. in Guatemala in 1934 and Chile in 1973) that overthrew democratically elected and communist-supported governments and imposed ferocious military dictatorships. The liberal philosopher does not ask himself whether the "monocratic power" he so eloquently condemns in socialist-oriented countries is not, at least in part, the answer to the "monocratic power" exercised by the West on a world level and which he completely ignores.

To be exact, in addition to the treatment reserved for peoples in colonial or semi-colonial conditions and for countries that are sovereignly and arbitrarily attacked from time to time, Bobbio also removes from his framework the treatment inflicted on peoples of colonial origin and residing in the same capitalist and "democratic" metropolis. While it also resorts to genocidal practices in an attempt to liquidate the Algerian revolution, how does France deal with the Arabs and Maghrebis who work and live in France? Here is what two unsuspected journalistic sources tell us: on October 17, 1961, against the Arabs and Maghreb of Paris, the French police unleashed a savage violence. It is a sort of "St. Bartholomew's Day": "corpses by the dozens thrown into the Seine." And that's not all: "Beaten to death, shot dead, drowned in the indifference of a 'white city' that let the flics unleash manhunts and murders on the great boulevards for hours" (Benedict, 1995). And yet, "there were Parisians, at the 'Flore', who



enjoyed the show, exulting at the terrifying scenes" (Munzi, 1995).

And in the 1960s, while it was busy repressing the anti-colonial revolution in Indochina, Latin America and the Third World, how did the United States deal with African Americans? Yes, the tenacious resistance of the regime of racial discrimination and segregation is universally known. In the 1960s, more than 400 black men from Alabama were used as human guinea pigs by the government. Suffering from syphilis, they were not treated because the authorities wanted to study the effects of the disease on a 'sample of the population'" (R. E., 1997).

And just as he removes the question of the freedom of colonial peoples or peoples of colonial origin, so Bobbio does not bother to investigate the harmful consequences that the removal of this theme has had on the tradition of liberal-socialist thought in the broadest sense. One could take as a starting point Mill, who is celebrated by the Turin philosopher as a champion of the cause of freedom and socialism at the same time, but who, as we know, explicitly theorized the "despotism" of the West over the rest of the world, legitimized the opium wars, and in the course of this struggle against the "ruffians" in a letter dated March 13, 1857, he even appealed not to be led astray by the "appeals to humanity and the Christian spirit" (Mill, 1963, vol. XV, p. 528).

Let's jump forward a few decades. Giving the floor to a British historian, let's see what happened in Iraq, after the First World War became part of the British Empire and precisely in revolt to achieve independence: against the rebels, the troops sent by the government in London unleashed "cruel reprisals", "set fire to their villages and committed other actions that today we would judge excessively repressive if not downright barbaric". It was certainly not Churchill who stopped them, but rather invited the air force to teach a harsh lesson to the

"recalcitrant natives", hitting them with an "experimental work" based on "gas bullets and above all mustard gas" (Catherwood, 2004, pp. 89 and 85). Four years later, the first Labour government in the history of England also prided itself on its presumed humanitarian spirit, for having resorted, in the repression of the revolt that broke out in Iraq, not to ground troops but to aerial bombardments, which, however, were announced, it is not clear whether to warn a largely illiterate population or to better terrorize it. The Minister for the Colonies, J. H. Thomas, declares that the Labour Government is "proud and jealous guardian of the Empire, and ... determined to preserve it" (in Miliband, 1968, pp. 126-7 and note 81).

In the mid-twentieth century, the socialist François Mitterrand took a similar attitude, when in 1954, immediately after the beginning of the uprising of the Algerian people in the struggle for independence, he declared: "Algeria is France; from Flanders to Congo, one law, one nation, one parliament. That is the Constitution, that is our will. Only one negotiation: war" (in Cahen, Pouteau, 1964, vol. I, p. 47). A war, it should be added, that systematically resorts to torture and does not disdain genocidal practices. There are only two years left since the "painful masquerade" of Suez, in which, as far as France is concerned, the protagonist is another socialist, namely Guy Mollet.

## The Analysis of Fascism: Bobbio and the Break with Liberal Socialism

According to the late Bobbio, fascism is simply the reaction to communism, and therefore the best contribution that communists could make to the fight

against the scourge they so passionately denounced would be to hasten to disappear so as to make it possible for fascism to disappear as well. The Turin philosopher is convinced that his stance is an expression of common sense. But then, proceeding backwards, it should be added that, without the abolition of slavery in the United States and the claim of former slaves to even enjoy political rights, the Ku Klux Klan would never have arisen to reaffirm the regime of white supremacy and the racial state; without the revolution of 1848 in Paris, and, above all, without the desperate revolt of the workers in June, Bonapartism would not have arisen and prevailed; without the great revolution of the black slaves of Santo Domingo directed by Toussaint Louverture there would not have been the ferocious attempt at white redemption carried out by the powerful army sent by Napoleon; without the French Revolution and its influence across the Channel, there would have been no suspension of habeas corpus in England. That is to say, on closer inspection, the presumed common sense turns out to be the traditional sigh of all conservatives: ah, if the black slaves had not pretended to break their chains, if the French popular classes had not rebelled against their condition of hardship and servitude, if the workers, Had the Russian peasants and soldiers continued to suffer as an ineluctable destiny their centuries-old misery and death by the millions on the battlefields! If everyone had resigned themselves to their fate, the subsequent movements of reaction would not have occurred. In the beginning, the theorists of the Restoration declared, it was original sin, that is, it was the foolish and sacrilegious claim to escape the vale of tears that was the just and inescapable consequence of original sin.

It is a singular way of arguing (or sighing); it should at least be freed from its most obvious one-sidedness: without the Bolshevik revolution the revolution that broke out the following year in Germany and Austria and which not only

helped to put an end to the interminable massacre, but which, by overthrowing the Hohenzollern and Habsburg dynasties, dealt a decisive blow to the old regime still alive and vital; On the other hand, a line of continuity leads from Lenin's call to revolt to the "slaves" of the colonies to the gigantic process of emancipation of the colonial peoples and the indictment of racism in its various forms.

The main issue is another. Are we really to regard fascism and Nazism as a simple movement of reaction to communism? An authoritative historian already speaks, in the title of his book, of "the French origins of fascism" and starts from the second half of the nineteenth century: we are thus referred to a country that is in no danger of communist subversion and to a date well before the formation of the Bolshevik party itself (Sternhell, 1978). In investigating the origins of Nazism in particular, other historians are less distant from the theater in which the October Revolution took place, but it is not to it that they refer but to the circles that rose up against it, waving the banner of the struggle against the "Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy" and the revival of the white world. On the other hand, one only has to read Hitler and Rosenberg to realize their insistent reference to the regime of white supremacy in force in the South of the United States at the time.

When he explains fascism as a simple movement of reaction to the threat of social revolution, Bobbio (1994) breaks with the tradition of thought to which he claims to refer. The war is very present in the analysis of Carlo Rosselli, who we have seen the Italian bourgeoisie impeached for the "bellicose vitality" and the charge of violence it demonstrated, even before resorting to fascist squads, with the invasion of Libya and with the subsequent participation (still stimulated by colonialist ambitions) in the carnage of the First World War.

Leaving aside colonialism, militarism and the ideological poisoning they stimulated, the Libyan war and the coup de

main with which in 1915 the intervention in a world conflict whose horror is now evident is now evident, leaving aside the cannonades of Bava Beccaris and the various attempts to establish an authoritarian regime already at the end of the nineteenth century, operating this frightening abstraction, Bobbio can absolve the liberal-bourgeois society of any responsibility for fascism, which is instead placed on the account of communism. But Bonapartism in France and the Ku Klux Klan in the USA should be explained in a similar way: both should be put on the account of the movements they intend to fight. Bourgeois and liberal society can thus regain that immaculateness that even Gobetti and Rosselli had intended to call into question.

Togliatti is closer to the interpretation of the origins of fascism by liberal socialism than to the late Bobbio. In the eyes of the communist leader, the coup d'état that resulted in the establishment of Mussolini's dictatorship began to take shape as early as 1915 with the intervention in the conflict and participation in the carnage imposed, against the will of Parliament and the country, by the Crown and the streets. These were the days in which D'Annunzio "invoked, against those who were opposed to the entry into the war, the stick, the slap, the kick, the fist (authentic expressions) and - finally - 'stoning and burning [the lighting of a stake] immediately carried out'" (Togliatti, 1973-84, vol. vi, p. 525). The squadristism has in fact begun. Rendered redundant by the mobilization and total regimentation of the war and replaced by violence from above the state and military apparatus, the squads came back into vogue with the end of the conflict and unleashed a crescendo of violence until the march on Rome and the imposition of the dictatorship.

The controversy in the years immediately following the Second World War between the liberal socialists and Croce (1993, vol. II, pp. 51 and 101) is well known, as he was

reluctant to push too deeply the investigation into the terrain in which fascism had its roots and therefore inclined to explain fascism as "an intellectual and moral disease" that suddenly attacked a fundamentally healthy organism. The last Bobbio flattened himself on the positions of Croce (antagonist of liberal socialism) and radicalized them further. In fact, the Neapolitan philosopher knew Gentile too well to ignore that, according to the latter, fascism was "the child of war" (Gentile, 1991, p. 50), of war, as far as Italy was concerned, decided by a liberal regime and opposed and impeached by the socialist and communist movement. It should be added that during the years of Mussolini's dictatorship, Croce (1967, p. 151) had made an important observation: the Italian nationalists (who later merged into fascism) claimed to "reform education and schools from the ground up, throwing away the old books of timid morality and replacing them with those of Kipling and Roosevelt." Unexpectedly, research into the origins of fascism led not only in the direction of colonialism but also in the direction of the two classical countries of the liberal tradition. The historical picture traced by the late Bobbio rather resembles that of Nolte, who in order to explain the horror of the twentieth century takes his cue from the October Revolution rather than from the colonialism against which the Bolsheviks call to fight and which Hitler in particular intends to take up, radicalize and assert in Europe itself.

## 1848 and 1989: Tocqueville and Bobbio

A few weeks after the ferocious suppression of the workers' revolt of June 1848, to which he had also made his brave contribution, Tocqueville (1866, pp. 458-9) expressed

his dismay in a letter of 21 July: the state of mind of the defeated was "far from announcing a revolution that is ending"; Many of the insurgents "sincerely believed that society was founded on injustice and wanted to give it a different basis"; Well, "it is this sort of religion that our bayonets and guns will not destroy." Absent from the balance sheet here were the illusions of those who, after the bloody defeat inflicted on the "barbarians", expected that they would resign themselves to their fate. No, what heartened the defeated was the expectation of a more just social order, it was the unfortunate vision that the existing social order, far from being willed and consecrated by Providence, as the French liberal claimed (cf. above, p. 49), could and should be modified by political action. By virtue of this widespread and unstoppable belief, the bloodbath that had just taken place, although inevitable and healthy, would not have been able to stop the upheavals underway. About two years later, in a letter dated April 28, 1850, Tocqueville added to the dose:

The tide is rising. Not only have we not seen the end of the immense revolution that began before us, but presumably neither will the child who is born today. It is not a question of a modification but of a [radical] transformation of the social body [...] One senses that the old world is ending, but what will the new world be like? The great minds of our time are unable to say this, just as those of antiquity were unable to foresee the abolition of slavery, Christian society, the invasion of barbarians, all the great things that have renewed the face of the earth (ibid., p.

The revolutionary wave was becoming more and more threatening, and the French liberal himself was beginning to show signs of uncertainty: was the political and social order proper to France and the liberal West really consecrated by Providence? On the other hand, it is on the relations in force at the international level that Tocqueville was in no way invested by doubt, judging at least by a letter he sent to Gobineau on November 13, 1855:

You are in the heart of the Asian and Muslim world: I would be curious to know to what you attribute the rapid and, apparently, unstoppable decadence of all the races you have seen passing [...] A few millions of men who, a few centuries ago, lived almost without shelter in forests and swamps, will be before a hundred years the transformers of the globe which they inhabit and the rulers of their whole species. Nothing is more clearly foreordained in the views of Providence. If they are often, I agree, great scoundrels, they are at least scoundrels to whom God has given strength and power, and whom He has manifestly placed, for a time, at the head of the human race. Nothing will stand before them on the surface of the earth. I have no doubt about that. I'm afraid this sounds like philosophical heresy to you. But if you have the theory on your side, I trust that I have the facts on my side, a trifle that is not without importance (Tocqueville, 1951, vol. IX, pp. 143-4).

The revolutionary wave was destined to call everything into question, except the insurmountable "fact" of the domination exercised by the West over the rest of the world.

Let's now jump forward almost a century and a half. On June 9, 1989, as "real socialism" lost piece after piece in Eastern Europe and as the People's Republic of China was shaken by the tragedy of Tiananmen Square, Norberto Bobbio wrote:

In a world of appalling injustices, such as the one in which the poor, the derelict are condemned to live, those crushed by unattainable and apparently unchangeable great economic potentates, on which political powers, even those that are formally democratic, almost always depend, to think that the hope of revolution is extinguished, and is over only because the communist utopia has failed, it means closing one's eyes so as not to see (Bobbio, 1990a, pp. 129-30).

It seemed to be a courageous and unconventional stance, and it was so even when confronted with the illusions and pretensions of those who triumphantly announced the "end of history." However, like Tocqueville, Bobbio was not even touched by doubt regarding the domination that the West claimed (and claims) to exercise over the rest of the planet. The Turin philosopher



mentioned the Third World only for its "poor peasants" (ibid., p. 129), that is, in relation to the problem of poverty, but without making any reference to its claim for real political and economic independence, with the definitive cancellation of relations of colonial or neocolonial domination.

Yet in those years there was no shortage of scholars and political personalities who thus clarified the reasons for their exultation at the turning point of 1989-91: the West had triumphed not only over communism but also over third-worldism; Fortunately, power relations had been established between the centre and the periphery, not unlike those in force before decolonisation; There were even those who explicitly praised the return of colonialism. Far from calling into question the inequality that was being re-established between the centre and the periphery, Bobbio regularly supported the wars that the West and in the first place the United States unleashed, attributing to himself the exclusive right to intervene in every corner of the world even without the authorization of the UN Security Council, and thus claiming to enshrine in practice the principle of inequality between nations: those destined to govern the whole of humanity and those destined instead to be governed if necessary even with recourse to naked and raw force.

The removal of this problem ended up distorting the reading of the Cold War. We read: "Democracy has won the challenge to historical communism, let's face it. But with what means and with what ideals is it prepared to face the same problems from which the communist challenge was born?" (ibid., p. 130). Were communism and democracy competing against each other? How, then, can we explain the military dictatorships imposed by the West in Latin America (and other parts of the world), overthrowing democratically elected governments supported and defended by communists? In France-dominated Algeria and

white supremacy South Africa, was it the Western countries that supported or tolerated this state of affairs that represented the cause of democracy, or the communist parties and countries that supported the anti-colonialist and anti-racist revolution? It is useless to continue with these questions: at least in those years, the colonial question had literally disappeared from Bobbio's political and philosophical horizon. The historical fundamental limit of Tocqueville's thought and of liberalism as such remained unchanged.

To the "democracy" that triumphed in Eastern Europe, he <(Bobbio)> entrusted the task of overcoming the existing "appalling injustices." In fact, once in power, the pro-Western democrats in Russia appropriated social wealth with such voracity as to provoke a social catastrophe and the "genocide of the elderly," and with such unscrupulousness and cynicism that they aroused the scandal of even the < > organs of the press most devoutly attached to neoliberalism (see above, pp. 45-6). The removal of the colonial and neocolonial question was intertwined with disorientation about how to deal with the social question. There is no doubt about it: liberal socialism was over!

## Ecological revival of liberal socialism?

Liberalism has faded away in its traditional form, and now seems to be experiencing a revival in an ecological guise. Here is one of the authors most committed to denouncing "unlimited growth" (i.e., growth as such) pronouncing himself in favor of a "reciprocal balance of liberalism and socialism" and for a "radicalized and universalized liberal socialism" (Caillé, 2013, pp. 49-50).

However, this version of liberal socialism comes from the current of thought that, with Latouche, condemns the "Thirty Glorious Years" and the welfare state with fiery words (Losurdo, 2014a, pp. 261-7). In any case, in the new doctrine the basic limitations of the old one clearly re-emerge. Everything continues to revolve around the problem of reconciling the "individual freedom" privileged by liberalism and the "equality" privileged by "socialism and communism" (Caillé, 2013, p. 47), as if the colonial expansionism promoted by the capitalist and liberal world had not resulted in the loss of freedom for the majority of humanity, and as if the world anti-colonialist revolution of which the communists were the main ones had not been a struggle for freedom Protagonists. The calm juxtaposition of the different "totalitarianisms" goes in the same direction, namely: "Nazism, Communism or Fascism" (ibid., p. 78). By reviving and radicalizing the colonial tradition, the Third Reich explicitly proposed to subjugate and enslave the Slavic Untermenschen; By thwarting Hitler's attempt to build its continental-style colonial empire in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union was giving impetus to the anti-colonial revolution throughout the world. This difference, indeed this antithesis, is ignored by the traditional theory of totalitarianism as well as by ecological liberal socialism; but in its best moments, before Bobbio's involution, liberal socialism (think in particular of Carlo Rosselli) never put the Third Reich and the Soviet Union on the same level.

It is the whole philosophy of the history of ecological liberal socialism that is marked by the removal of the colonial question: although criticized for having cultivated the "hope of indefinite and uninterrupted growth", the "Thirty Glorious Years", that is, the three decades following the end of the Second World War and which saw the development of the welfare state, They are credited with having "contributed considerably", through economic

development, "to a certain pacification of the world" (ibid., pp. 16-7 and 29). The judgment formulated here is much more balanced than that of Latouche, for whom the "Thirty Glorious Years" are exclusively synonymous with absolute ecological catastrophe. And yet, if we correctly analyze the three decades from the end of the Second World War to the mid-seventies, we see in Indochina the anti-colonialist movement clashing first with France and then with the United States and suffering savage bombings of which millions and millions of people still bear the devastating consequences on their bodies today; in Latin America, the revolt against the Monroe Doctrine and the military dictatorships imposed by Washington provoked repression of a sometimes genocidal character. France, the country of which Caillé is a citizen, also resorted to genocidal practices in an attempt to liquidate the anti-colonial revolution. And, as we know, all this also had consequences in Paris, where the hunt for Algerians and their lynching or drowning became an entertaining mass spectacle. Would this be "a certain pacification of the world"? The removal of the colonial question could not be more radical.

Given these assumptions, no attention can be expected for the neocolonial question. This is demonstrated by the silence reserved for the essential role played by France in the wars unleashed to impose in the Middle East what has been defined by the international press as a "new Sykes-Picot", that is, a new agreement for the partition of the Middle East, similar to the one secretly signed during the First World War by the two diplomats, respectively British and French, which gave its name to the 1916 pact (Losurdo, 2014a, pp. 42-8). This is also demonstrated by the liquidatory judgment on emerging countries and in particular on China: their commitment to complete the anti-colonial revolution by freeing hundreds of millions of people from hunger and achieving a certain independence also on the industrial and technological level is ignored.

Finally, Caillé repeatedly pays homage to democracy, but declines this category in a completely partial way, glossing over the problem of the democratization of international relations; On the other hand, it is insisted on by countries that have shaken off colonial or neo-colonial rule and cannot achieve real independence if the law of the strongest continues to apply in international relations.

But let us leave all this aside in order to concentrate on the social question within the individual countries, located above all in the capitalist metropolis. The thesis suggested, if not openly enunciated, by Caillé (2013, pp. 16, 29 and 33) is clear: since the "Thirty Glorious Years" of growth are now over, it is necessary to say goodbye to the welfare state that has resulted from it. On the other hand, you can also be happy in your new situation. Historically, by referring to the supposed happiness of slaves, serfs, and the poor, the ruling class has attempted to justify even the most oppressive social relations. If, on the other hand, we make use of slightly less subjective criteria, we can start from two statistical data: "In the United Kingdom, life expectancy in 1990 was 76 years, compared to 48 in 1900" (Ferguson, 2008, p. 7). If existence in the capitalist metropolis was short, especially in the lower classes, how can we define it in the colonies? In 1913 "life expectancy in England was almost twice as high as in India" (Ferguson, 2011, p. 5). Are all the decades of life that have been added in England and, to a greater extent, in the former colonies, all marked by misery? Of course, these radical changes are the result not only of the growth and development of science and technology, but also of fierce political and social struggles. But it is precisely the class struggle that is largely absent from the framework outlined by liberal socialism in an ecological version. Those authors who, without paying homage to socialism in any of its versions, recognize the strong impetus that neoliberalism and the strong and growing polarization have derived from the

victory achieved by the West in the Cold War, demonstrate a greater understanding of the concrete historical efficacy deployed by socialism in the realization of social and economic rights and in the construction of the welfare state.

If classical liberal socialism has historically shown itself to be uncertain or incapable of promoting the anti-colonial revolution, the new liberal socialism shows all its limits also with regard to the struggle in defense of the welfare state.

## Communist Movement and the Legacy of Liberal Socialism

When, in 1997, he proposed substituting the combination of freedom and justice for that of liberalism and socialism, Bobbio in fact distanced himself from liberal socialism, which arose in the wake of the struggle against the "imperialist reaction" of the late nineteenth century, which resulted in the First World War, against which the October Revolution and the international communist movement rose up. It is the total removal of the colonial and neocolonial question that characterizes the binomial suggested by the Turin philosopher. It is no coincidence that, in the last phase of its evolution, it legitimizes one after the other the wars unleashed by the West, even without the approval of the UN Security Council, against weak and essentially defenseless countries. And it legitimizes them in the name of a democratic and humanitarian interventionism, harshly criticized at the beginning of the twentieth century by one of the authors of reference, namely one of the founding fathers of British liberal socialism.

It's Hobson. The arguments he used are extraordinarily topical: by intervening militarily in this or that corner of the world, the British Empire claims to promote the cause of civilization and humanity, claims to be "truly international, in that it helps to realize a genuinely enlightened world policy, the 'real' or rational will of the community of nations". Far from being synonymous with internationalism and universalism, such an attitude is only an expression of national egoism, "national individualism," chauvinism (Hobson, 1901, pp. 45-6).

Does the intervention of democratic Britain in countries and regions often dominated by an autocratic regime still contribute to the expansion of democracy in the world? In reality, "every empire is autocratic as such" and, of course, "a nation that acts both as judge and executioner" does not contribute to the realization of democracy in international relations, a nation that judges and condemns another nation as autocratic and authoritarian, and then invests it with devastating firepower (ibid., pp. 55 and 47). The political and historical reality is quite different from the ideology of democratic interventionism:

The more Britain strives to infuse democracy into the Empire, to implant, irrigate, and grow "free" institutions in the states it conquers, the more glaringly manifest the contradictions between Empire and Democracy become. A strong centralization based on militarism and defended against it may indeed provide a powerful and sufficiently functional machine for the lower-ranking operations that can be carried out by a machine, but if we try to "impose by force" free British institutions and notions of self-government on states whose native spirit we have crushed, Failure will become apparent (ibid., p. 54).

Even if it is sincere and disinterested, the call to impose by force, if necessary, universal values, that is, "certain common marks of 'justice', 'freedom', 'civilization'", without taking into account national peculiarities and rights and the problem of democracy in international relations, is based on a "sophistry", indeed on a "dangerous sophistry".

We must beware of those for whom "nationality is not much better than a foolish feeling" (ibid., pp. 52 and 54).

But does not insisting on the national question mean betraying the cause of internationalism and universalism? The reply of the exponent of British liberal socialism to this objection is clear and clear: to trample on the national rights of the weakest is to "destroy the most essential means of achieving in the future that solid federation of all civilized peoples which constitutes the only hope or guarantee against the recrudescence of barbarism in the form of war"; Yes, "internationalism is not the negation but the expansion of the national spirit" (ibid., pp. 55-6). It's not just the liberal champions of the Empire who ignore or dismiss this:

Our socialists who think it expedient to sweep away the frontiers of nations so as to force all men to become brothers are not really the scientific gentlemen they claim to be. They wish to substitute artificial catastrophe for natural growth (ibid., p. 54)

Let us imagine, absurdly, that the democratic and humanitarian intervention ends in the best possible way and helps the country under attack to reach a higher level of civilisation. Even in this case, the overall balance would still be negative: it is necessary not to lose sight of "the usefulness of the relationship of trust between nations and the damage that the violation of precise national rights inflicts on moral relations between nations" (ibid., p. 48). In other words, we must bear in mind the poisoning that has occurred in international relations and which is a harbinger of serious consequences.

In harshly criticizing aggressive internationalism and imperial universalism, Hobson encounters the movement that took its cue from Marx and Engels. The second, in particular, emphasizes that the "international union of the proletariat" presupposes the "autonomy" of individual nations (mew, 4; 590), that it is not licit "to impose any



happiness on any foreign people" (ibid., 35; 357-8) and that oppressed nations "have not only the right but also the duty to be national even before they are international" (ibid., 35; 271). On the contrary, it is precisely in promoting and supporting the struggle of oppressed nations that authentic internationalism lies. Lenin thought of this problem in more general terms when he subscribed to the "excellent formula" of Hegelian Logic according to which the universal must be such as to contain within itself "the richness of the particular" (ibid., 38; 98). But Hobson's attitude is no different, and it is no coincidence that, already in the title of the essay quoted at length here, he defines Socialistic Imperialism as the aggressive and imperial internationalism assumed by certain "socialists" inclined to celebrate the expansionist march of the British Empire as the advance of universal civilization. It is scarcely necessary to recall this: the polemic against "social-imperialism" and the "social-imperialists" ("i.e., socialists in words, imperialists in deeds") is a recurring motif in Lenin, who proceeds to denounce it, sometimes referring explicitly to Hobson's essay of 1901 (ibid., 22; 357 and 285). The critique of Socialistic Imperialism, an important and one of the most courageous aspects of liberal socialism, was inherited by the communist movement, certainly not by the "socialists" and "labourists" of our time, nor even by Bobbio, who would have appeared to be supporters or accomplices of "social-imperialism" in the eyes of both Hobson and Lenin.

1. On Mill, cf. Losurdo (2005a, pp. 72-5), for workhouses; ibid., pp. 196-200, for the prohibition of marriage for the poor; ibid., pp. 208-12, for the condemnation of the union; ibid., pp. 221-4, for Γ "absolute obedience" of colonial peoples and for transient slavery for "the uncivilized races"; ibid., pp. 245-8, for the "direct despotism" of the West; ibid., pp. 245-4, for the

"good and solid despotism" over Ireland. Cf. Losurdo (1993, pp. 30-2) for the plural vote in favor of the "most intelligent."

2. Cf. Losurdo (2005a, pp. 325-9), for Spencer; Losurdo (2007, pp. 21-4), for Sudan.

3. I derive this information from André Jardin's note to Tocqueville (1951, vol. III. I, pp. 150-1).

4. ["Democracy of the People of the Lords", cf. Losurdo (2005a, pp. 103-8 and pp. 116-37); N.d.C.].

5. Cf. Berlin (1989; the first essay was published in 1949 in *Foreign Affairs: Political Ideas of the Twentieth Century*); for della Volpe, cf. Bobbio (1977c).

6. Cf. Losurdo (2005a, pp. 311-4), on the "views of Providence"; there for the "empty cradle"; *ibid.*, pp. 19-22, for Franklin.

7. LO, 15; 177-9 [*Flammable Substances in World Politics*, 1908) and LO, 19; 811 (*Backward Europe and Advanced Asia*, 1913); for the reference to Marx, cf. Mew, 9; 225; mega, I, 12, p. 251

### 3. Maturation of the communist project and liberal legacy

#### Liberal Legacy and Criticism of Populism

To note the decline of liberal socialism and to draw attention to its sometimes inglorious results is not to say that the communist movement has nothing to learn from the liberal tradition. The Church, which has had the enormous historical merit of having interpreted the needs and aspirations of the subaltern classes and oppressed peoples, has not always succeeded in freeing itself fully from the anxieties and limitations inherent in a condition of scarcity and desperate toil and misery; These narrownesses and limitations are fundamentally alien to the political movements that are the expression of the privileged classes. To clarify this point, I refer you to Adam Smith and to be exact to an illuminating page of *The Wealth of Nations*:

In every civilized society, in every society in which the distinction of classes has been completely affirmed, there have always been, at the same time, two different orders or systems of current morality: one of these may be called the rigorous or austere, and the other the liberal or, if you prefer, lax. The former is generally admired and appreciated by ordinary people, while the latter is usually more esteemed and adopted by the so-called worldly people. In the liberal or lax system, luxury, light-heartedness, and even disordered enjoyment, the pursuit of pleasure driven to a certain degree of intemperance, the carelessness of chastity, at least in one of the sexes, provided they are not accompanied by gross indecency and do not lead to perfidy and injustice, are generally treated with much indulgence, and are easily excused or entirely forgiven. In the austere system, on the contrary, these excesses are regarded with the greatest repugnance and execration. The vices arising from levity are always ruinous to the common people, and a single week of light-

heartedness and dissipation often leads to the ruining of a poor worker forever, leading him to commit the most heinous crimes out of desperation (Smith, 1977, p. 782 -book V, chap. 1, part III, art. III).

In the subaltern classes, austere morality tends to be transformed from a means of survival into an ideal in itself: sacrifice and renunciation of consumer goods and sexual gratification end up being transfigured as inalienable values, scarcity and toil are configured as the place of moral excellence, from which the privileged are by definition excluded. Those who can enjoy abundance and ease. Nietzsche was right, albeit on the basis of his aristocratic radicalism, to read in this attitude (which we could define as populist) a sort of moral revenge and ideal plebeian revenge.

Traditionally, the condemnation of social polarization and the stance in favor of the poor have been inspired by populism, understood as a synonym for the transfiguration of austere morality. In order not to start too far away, from the preaching of the Gospel or even before that from Jewish prophetism, let us focus on two authors who were almost contemporaries of the great English economist. I am referring to Rousseau and Fichte: unlike Smith, who took a detached attitude, they strongly felt the social question and condemned the polarization of wealth and poverty as an intolerable scandal; However, in both, plebeian radicalism takes on sobering tones. In forcefully affirming that it is necessary to protect "citizens against the danger of falling into poverty," together with the "extreme inequality of fortune," Rousseau denounces the fact that "industries and arts for the production of discretionary goods [are] favored at the expense of useful and laborious trades; agriculture sacrificed to trade." Not dissimilar is Fichte's attitude. After agreeing with the thesis that identifies the cause of the "collapse," that is, of the revolution in France, in the position of strong privilege accorded to "factories to the detriment of agriculture," he added: "Of all the means of

maintaining and physically increasing mankind (which is in turn a function of spiritual culture), agriculture is the first, and all other branches must be subordinate to it." The denunciation of the "tyranny" of the upper classes goes hand in hand with the condemnation of "luxury" as such, of the general "unruliness" and "dissipation," of the "coarseness of the merchants," and even of the "art of seduction" and "gluttony." In short, it is "our corrupt age" that is being impeached <(cf. Losurdo, 2011, pp. 346-51)>. In this case, the nostalgia for the good old days of pre-industrial society and the associated transfiguration of austere morality are even more distinct.

Having learned the lesson of Hegel, who was fully aware of the emancipatory potential inherent in industrial development and who not surprisingly identified the city as the privileged place of the struggle for freedom (while the traditional rural world "is more inclined to submission" <cf. *ibid.*, p. 350), Marx and Engels represent a turning point. As the Communist Manifesto makes clear, the development of the productive forces and social wealth constitutes a clear advance, and not only in terms of the satisfaction of material needs. It makes it possible to overcome the "idiotism of rural life" and also promotes on the intellectual level "universal trade, universal interdependence among nations" <(Marx, Engels, 2003, p. ii)> which are full of promise for the maturation and deployment of the individual personality and for the realization of closer and less belligerent relations between different cultures and peoples.

The great thinker and revolutionary is very far removed from the tendency to celebrate "austere" morality and to transfigure scarcity as a place of spiritual fullness and moral excellence. The Misery of Philosophy, which Marx contrasts with Proudhon's Philosophy of Misery, is also a reckoning with populism. The French author's populism was also manifested in the condemnation of the incipient

feminist movement as a synonym for "pornocracy": a movement that was not the exclusive prerogative of the humble and miserable and that saw the active participation of women belonging to the upper classes could not fail to be suspicious in the eyes of the populist. And for similar reasons, even the struggle of an oppressed nation such as Poland - to give just one example - a struggle conducted by a front so broad as to embrace the nobility (i.e., a class accustomed to luxury), could only be viewed with disdain by a singer of "austere morality" such as Proudhon < (cf. Losurdo, 2013, pp. 108-11 and pp. 348-9)>.

In those years and still today, populism manifested itself and manifests itself in many forms. In the final analysis, Luddism also referred to it, which, although starting from the concrete need to prevent redundancies and unemployment induced by technological development and the capitalist use of this development, resulted in a de facto transfiguration of pre-industrial society, which it hoped to safeguard and preserve by promoting the destruction of modern machinery.

The movement that took its cue from Marx and Engels has taken on a mass character and a world-historical role, confronting and defeating populism in its various configurations. By clearly rejecting the positions of Proudhon, he was able to link the struggle for the emancipation of the working class and women to the struggles for national liberation of the oppressed peoples; Drawing on the lessons of his great masters, he understood that "a silent revolution [was] taking place in society, from which [it was] impossible to escape" (Mew, 8; 544) and that therefore Luddism, in addition to ignoring the enormous potential for emancipation implicit in the Industrial Revolution, was nevertheless quixotic.

In addition to the capitalist metropolis, distancing itself from Luddism and populism also played an essential role in the colonies, where modernity often burst in in the wake of

the conquistadors. It is a circumstance that has obviously favored populist reactions. In China in the 1900s, the Boxers targeted the same technical inventions as the West. Neither the telegraph nor the railways escaped their fury: the penetration of these innovations had coincided with the deployment of the technological and military power of the invaders and the consequent national humiliation of the country. Reflecting a few decades later on the defeat of the Boxers, Mao Zedong (1969-75, vol. I, p. 319) seems to compare them to the followers of Luddism: by proceeding to the "destruction of the machines", they revealed that they had remained stuck at the stage of perception, they had gone no further in the process of knowing the social system that caused their sufferings; Unlike the Marxists, they did not understand the difference between the machine and the capitalist use of the machine. And "empiricism" was also given by the "indiscriminate struggles against foreigners" and their inventions, rather than against imperialism.

And yet, the development of the communist movement is the story of a recurrent but never really decisive confrontation with populism. It has had to contend with movements and parties, which have also engaged in struggles for emancipation, but from a different ideological and political platform with a clearly populist imprint. One thinks of the essential role played by Gandhi in the anti-colonialist struggle of the Indian people. In the society he hoped for and held up as a model, it was necessary to "leave the bed before dawn" in order to run to a strenuous job that would last all day and yet would in no way eliminate the "misery". There was no room for "leisure," which was viewed with suspicion as an occasion for sinful temptations. Moreover, it was a society in which alcohol, tea and even more so sexual relations not aimed at procreation were banned and therefore, in Gandhi's eyes,

characterized by "lust" and "animal passion" (Losurdo, 2010, pp. 106-8).

There is no doubt that we are in the presence of an ideal of society according to which moral excellence is inseparable from the scarcity of material resources and "austere" morality.

Although taking on a less clear-cut configuration, populism or the populist temptation has often made its presence felt within the communist movement itself. It is a phenomenon that became evident immediately after the October Revolution. The so-called "war communism", what Gramsci calls the "collectivism of misery, of suffering" and Trotsky the "socialized misery"<(cf. Losurdo, 2013, pp. 190-6)>, the more or less egalitarian sharing of scarcity and even hunger, instead of being considered an extraordinary measure, dictated by a desperate situation with no other way out, ends up being transfigured as a synonym of resistance to the bourgeois seductions of luxury and the superfluous and of Attachment to authentic values in the name of moderation and austerity, ultimately as a synonym for moral excellence and spiritual fullness. To carry out this transfiguration in an explicit way were in the first place fellow travelers of Bolshevism: starting from their Christian fervour, they had greeted and interpreted the October Revolution not so much as an overthrow of the capitalist-imperialist system, but rather as a revolt against the pursuit of profit but also of wealth as such, as a revolt against the auri sacra fames, identified and branded as the cause of war and catastrophe and, more generally, of the evil that had always afflicted humanity. But not insignificant sections of the communist movement in Russia and beyond were also fascinated by the "crude egalitarianism" and "universal asceticism" criticized by the Communist Manifesto. It is a text that in an almost prophetic way emphasizes: there is "nothing easier than to give Christian asceticism a coat of socialist paint" (Mew, 4; 484 and 489).



Within the communist movement, the populist temptation continues to be present far beyond the brief phase of "war communism." This is demonstrated by the recurring controversy that is developed against this temptation and which also involves two personalities who are on the other side on two opposing fronts. Let us give the floor to Stalin: "It would be foolish to think that socialism can be built on the basis of misery and privation, on the basis of the reduction of personal needs and the lowering of the standard of living of men to the level of the poor"; On the contrary, "socialism can be built only on the basis of an impetuous development of the productive forces of society" and "on the basis of a comfortable life for the workers," nay, "a comfortable and civilized life for all the members of society." Let us now give the floor to Trotsky: "On the terrain of 'socialized misery,' the struggle for the necessary threatens to resurrect 'all the old rubbish' and partially resurrects it at every step." A few decades later, in China, Deng Xiaoping felt compelled to reiterate "that poverty is not socialism and that socialism means the elimination of misery; It cannot be said that socialism is being built unless the productive forces are developed and the standard of living of the people is raised." And so, without prejudice to the fact that the goal to be pursued is that of "common prosperity", to escape from poverty and "to become rich is glorious!" Probably without knowing it, Deng Xiaoping was taking up the slogan with which more than half a century earlier Bukharin had tried to overcome the backwardness of Soviet agriculture, stimulating the commitment of the peasants, and had also distanced himself from the persistent nostalgia for the "collectivism of misery, of suffering" or for the "socialized misery" typical of "war communism" (Losurdo, 2013, pp. 190-6 and pp. 206-9).

## Populism as a cult of "degrowth" and "nature"

Precisely because the communist movement has never come to a definitive reckoning with populism, populism is taking its revenge today, and it is taking place in a new guise, appealing to ecology and the cult of "degrowth" and "nature." From this point on, Marxism is impeached for having ignored or underestimated the environmental issue. In fact, emphasizing the emancipatory potential implicit in the industrial revolution and the development of the productive forces is by no means closing one's eyes to the dangers and pitfalls. Everything can be said about Karl and Jenny Marx - in this context it is worth mentioning her too - except that they idolized material wealth: they could lead a brilliant and comfortable life, but they accepted to suffer scarcity and even misery, in order not to give up their ideas.

On a more strictly theoretical level, analyzing the condition of the colonies invaded by manufactured goods as well as by soldiers from Great Britain and with their traditional crafts put out of play and destroyed, Marx observes: "the destructive effects of English industry, seen in relation to India, a country as large as the whole of Europe, are palpable, and they are tremendous" (mega, I, 12, p. 15a). And, contrary to the prevailing myths today, it was Engels, one of the two authors of the Communist Manifesto, who was the first or among the first, as early as 1843, to denounce the catastrophic effects that a capitalist industrialization guided only by the logic of maximum profit can have on the natural and urban environment and on the health in the first place of factory workers and the subaltern classes crammed into unhealthy neighborhoods. In turn, Marx made it clear that a vision of social wealth that does not take into account nature and the environment is short-sighted and misleading. The Critique of the Gotha

Programme opens with a warning that sounds prophetic today: however great and growing the productivity of labour may be, it "is not the source of all wealth". We must never lose sight of a central point: "Nature is the source of use-values (and of these values consists real wealth!) as well as labour, which in itself is only the expression of a natural force, human labour-power" (Mew, 19; 15).

This analysis is far from outdated. Marx questions capitalism not only because of the unjust distribution of social wealth but also because of its inability to really develop it: "During commercial crises a large part is routinely destroyed, not only of the finished products, but even of the productive forces already created" (ibid., 4; 468). This destruction of the social wealth of capitalism is also manifested in its inability to adequately address the relationship between man and nature.

And so, when I observe that nowadays populism seeks its redemption by presenting itself in an ecological guise, I do not intend to question the gravity and urgency of the environmental question, but rather the nostalgia for the pre-industrial world that peeps out from the preaching of "degrowth": it is fabled of a society marked by simple customs and the repudiation of luxury and the superfluous, in the name of sobriety and the satisfaction of only essential needs; Only in this way, we are assured, will it be possible to save the planet, if it has not already been definitively and irreparably compromised.

The development of industrial society has always been accompanied by gloomy prophecies about the fate of society and the world. Shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century, a leading figure in the political world of Germany at the time, Ernst Moritz Arndt, thundered against "the accursed mania of the factories". Of course, they multiplied the strength of the

but at the cost of the devastation of man's material and spiritual world. And therefore:

Let us renounce all machinery, rather than run the risk that such machinism (Maschinenwesen) will destroy all our healthy vision of the state and the classes and trades, simple and natural, on which the preservation of all virtue, strength, and honesty depends. If all artisans become manufacturers, if finally even agriculture is regarded and managed as a factory, in short, if what is simple, stable, and solid disappears from human institutions, then it is bad for the happiness and splendor of our species. If we come to the point that we accept, saws and plummets, cut out and build houses by themselves, that the plough and the sickle alone plow and reap, that, finally, we travel in steam-engines over mountains and valleys, and rush into hot-air balloon battles, in short, that we need only loiter around our artificial machines, which would then do all the work for us, then we would become such a degenerate, useless and miserable species that history would keep its books eternally closed before us (in Losurdo, 1997a, pp. 422-30).

We are in 1840 to be exact: Germany was still an agricultural country; Paradoxically, nostalgia for the pre-industrial world emerged even before the advent of industrial society. The gloomy picture painted by the latter was at the same time the transfiguration of the good old days which, in Arndt's eyes, ensured "the happiness and splendour of our species". In fact, a few years later, a tragedy of appalling proportions struck Ireland, which was also still well on this side of the industrialization process, and decimated its population (see above, pp. 66-7).

Of course, Ireland was a colony. Let us see, then, what the absence of industrial development implied in a country like France. In 1689 a great writer and moralist, Jean de La Bruyère, painted a disconsolate picture of the situation in much of his country:

Scattered throughout the countryside, we see certain wild animals, male and female, black, bruised and sunburned, bent over the earth, which they rummage and move with an invincible obstinacy. They make articulate sounds, and when they stand up, they show a human face: in fact, they are men. At night they retire to their burrows where they live on black bread, water and roots.

This testimony is reported by a great historian who, although conservative or reactionary, adds other details

about the fate that awaits these "wild animals". They will "die in packs" in the following years; "By 1715, about a third, six millions, will have died of poverty and hunger" (Taine, 1986, pp. 569-70). A few decades later, the situation had not changed. In 1740, Jean Baptiste Massillon, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand, reported:

The people of our countryside live in terrible misery, without beds, without furniture; On the contrary, most of them, for half the year, lack the barley and oatmeal which is their only food, and which they are forced to take out of their mouths in order to pay their taxes. I have the pain of seeing with my own eyes this sad spectacle every year during my visits. We are at the point where the blacks [slaves] of our islands are infinitely more fortunate (ibid., p. 571).

The daily tragedy with which we are dealing here is certainly the result of an unjust distribution of social wealth, but also of the limitation of this wealth: given the poor development of the productive forces, the appropriation of surplus labour and surplus value by the narrow privileged elite entails the condemnation of the great mass of the population to the most desperate misery, often forced to suffer death by starvation. It is the Industrial Revolution that has contributed to questioning these social relations. Of course, they disappeared or underwent profound transformations only as a result of great, epic class struggles, but these could only fully unfold after the development of the productive forces had ridiculed the traditional ideology according to which misery was to be placed exclusively on the account of stepmother nature.

The populism of degrowth cultivates the illusion that it is enough to avoid the superfluous and consumerism to save the environment. In fact, if we take China, we see that the main cause of pollution is the need to satisfy the most basic needs. It is a country that is home to about 22% of the world's population, but has only 7% of the world's arable land. The cultivated area per inhabitant is therefore

equal to 0.09 hectares, four times less than the world average" (Comito, 2014, pp. 65-6). It is this disproportion that for centuries has led to an extension of the area under cereals obtained through disastrous deforestation. Now, however, the trend has reversed; in China, in contrast to the rest of the world, the wooded and forest area is clearly expanding, thanks also to the return of a non-negligible part of the cereal area to its previous forest use. But this partial rescue of nature has been made possible not by degrowth but by development: "Today, productivity per hectare is more than double that of India."

Another example can be given, again with reference to China: "Cement processing is one of the largest contributors to the emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere" (Fishman, 2005, p. 127). It is the cement that is used for the construction of houses, schools, hospitals. To be truly habitable, such buildings must be equipped with heating systems and, in warmer regions, with air conditioning systems. The resulting energy consumption is another major source of pollution: "China increases energy production every two years by the entire amount of electricity produced in Britain" (ibid., p. 128). There is no shortage of self-styled apostles of ecology who claim to "save" the environment by sacrificing entire peoples en masse: in addition to being morally inadmissible, such an approach would be logically contradictory, given that man is an integral part of nature. In reality, the solution to the gigantic problems just mentioned does not lie in a quixotic process backwards to a mythical zero point of growth. On the contrary, it is a question of going even further: produced by qualitative development and the knowledge economy, renewable energies - a sector in which China already occupies a leading position - are called upon to save nature in its totality, that is, including the human species.

By eschewing modern industry and (at least ideally) turning to the countryside and agriculture, the followers of "degrowth" believe they are returning to "nature." But this is the most outlandish of myths; Agriculture and food production are the result of what is considered by an illustrious ethnologist and philosopher to be the greatest revolution in history, which took place a few thousand years ago:

We still depend on the immense discoveries that marked what is called, without really exaggeration, the Neolithic revolution: agriculture, breeding, ceramics, weaving... For the last eight or ten thousand years, we have confined ourselves to all these "arts of civilization" (Lévi-Strauss, 2002, p. 32).

The denial of industrial civilization is not synonymous with the recovery of "nature." On the contrary, not only are we still on the terrain of history, but we are led back to a particularly tormented historical period. Like all revolutions, the Neolithic revolution stemmed from a crisis of the < previous order>, in which hunter-gatherers were the ones who procured food. The happiest or easiest period of this type of society was now over: hunters had become "more and more numerous and skilled," while the animal species that could be counted on were "fewer and fewer" or had "disappeared altogether." The "decline of natural resources" was strongly felt (Diamond, 1998, p. 82). What we might call a serious ecological crisis was taking place today. It was imperative to abandon the old system, but the arrival at the new one was anything but easy and painless:

Agriculture and sedentarization have prodigiously increased food resources, which has allowed the human population to grow. This has resulted in the expansion of infectious diseases, which tend to disappear when the population is too small to maintain pathogenic germs. Thus it can be said that, naturally without knowing it, the peoples who have become agricultural have chosen certain advantages, discounting inconveniences against which the peoples who remained hunters and gatherers remained better protected: their way of life prevents infectious diseases from being concentrated by

man on man, and by domestic animals still on man; but, of course, at the price of other disadvantages (Lévi-Strauss, 2002, p. 60).

In his time, Marx made a mockery of the bourgeois economists who, leaving behind them the upheavals that had overthrown the ancien régime, pointed to and celebrated capitalism as the final result of the historical process. And so, as *Misery of Philosophy* ironically put it, for them "there has been history, but now there is no more" (mew, 4; 139); The story was about the past, not the present. The adherents of degrowth proceed exactly the opposite: by transfiguring pre-industrial and agricultural society as a synonym for nature, they see history only in the wretched present, but ignore it or remove it altogether with an eye to the past. In this way, they end up precluding the possibility of reading the germs of the future that are implicit in the present. We have seen that, serious as it is, the ecological crisis of the present is not the first to have occurred in history, and everything suggests that it will not be the last. The transition from a nomadic hunter-gatherer society to one based on agriculture, breeding and sedentarization spans centuries and centuries, characterized by experiments, second thoughts and conflicts of all kinds. "It may also happen that agriculture is abandoned in favor of a return to the old way of life" which, however, after an interlude (of a few hundred years), gives way again, and this time definitively, to the new way of life (Diamond, 1998, p. 81). Placed in this millennial perspective, the hymns to degrowth and nostalgia for the world before the advent of industry and mass consumption appear to be a very limited and entirely predictable phenomenon. The gravity of the ecological crisis of the present is a reason not to look at the past with eyes clouded by tears or tears of senseless and in any case powerless regret, but to accelerate the planning and implementation of the future. The ongoing prodigious



development of renewable energies that do not need fossil fuels (limited and highly polluting) demonstrates once again that advances in technology, this human "objectified scientific capacity", identified and celebrated by Marx (1953, p. 594), contain a potentially prodigious effect of liberation, both in social relations and in the relations between man and nature. Except that such a result is far from a foregone conclusion. On the contrary, it will be unattainable as long as "science" continues to be "captured in the service of capital" (mew, 23; 382).

## Populism and messianism

Populism is often connected with messianism. The subaltern classes, who have suffered exploitation and oppression since time immemorial and who have seen social classes and political classes alternate in power that are different from each other but united by the desire to maintain the relationship of domination, have a tendency to represent emancipation as a total negation which, together with exploitation and oppression, puts an end once and for all possible instruments of exploitation and oppression. Thus disappears in hope and imagination the state apparatus in its various articulations, the army, the police, even the juridical norm as such, everything that makes possible and consecrates the exercise of force and the unfolding of the law of the strongest. In the new society there is no longer any place even for private property, however limited it may be, or even for money as such: one and the other would risk eternalizing or resurfacing social polarization and the oppression of the poor by the rich. The family, too, cannot fail to be regarded with suspicion: it is the vehicle of the hereditary transmission of property and

wealth and of the rottenness and violence connected with them. In order to be sustainable and lasting, these radical transformations cannot remain confined to a single country, and state and national borders are also disappearing in the imagination. Since all the material and objective prerequisites for the realization of the totally new world evoked and invoked here are lacking, the subject called to perform the miracle is identified in the superior spirits, alien to the vulgarity and temptations of ordinary men, who precisely for this reason act virtuously in a spontaneous way, without the need for norms imposed from above and from without. It is no coincidence that antinomianism, i.e. the rejection of the law and the norm of jurisprudence, already characterized in the Middle Ages, to a greater or lesser extent, the recurrent popular movements of protest and revolt. A similar consideration can be made with regard to the first English Revolution and especially to the followers of the "fifth monarchy", inspired by the messianic faith in the advent of a society devoid and not in need of juridical norms, for the fact that, in the construction of a just and egalitarian society, individuals would allow themselves to be enlightened and guided by divine grace.

It is not at all surprising that this tradition, which is in some way a spontaneous or poorly elaborated expression of the deep aspirations of the subaltern classes, should make its presence felt, albeit in a secularized form, in the socialist and communist movement. In 1879, August Bebel, a leading exponent of the German Socialist Party and a frequent interlocutor of Engels, wrote that in post-capitalist society, together with the state, "parliaments," customs, taxation, "courts," "lawyers and prosecutors," "prisons," the legal norm itself, and crimes were destined to disappear. As a result, "tens of thousands of laws, decrees and ordinances are being destroyed." Along with all this, the feelings of "hatred" and "revenge" were also destined to disappear (Bebel, 1964, pp. 481-3).

This is not the philosophically naïve stance of an autodidact. Immediately after the October Revolution, an eminent philosopher, in publishing the first edition of his *Spirit of Utopia*, called upon the Soviets to put an end not only to "all private economy" but also to all "economy of money" and, with it, to "mercantile morality which consecrates all that is most evil in man"; moreover, they were expected to "transform power into love" (Bloch, 1971, p. 198). At least in this case, the reference to the tradition of Jewish messianism and to the "tension [...] towards a messianic goal that does not yet exist and is located beyond the world" (ibid., pp. 311-1).

And now let's see how a book that has sometimes been hailed as a sort of new Manifesto of the Communist Party and which nevertheless met with extraordinary success at the beginning of our century ends:

Francis [of Assisi] rejected any instrumental discipline, and to the mortification of the flesh (in poverty and in the established order) he contrasted a joyful life that embraced all creatures and all nature. The animals, sister moon, brother sun, the birds of the fields, the exploited men and the poor, all together against the will to power and corruption. In postmodernity, we still find ourselves in the situation of Francis, contrasting the joy of being with the misery of power. It is a revolution that will get out of control, because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution remain together simply in love, and with innocence. These are the clarity and irrepressible joy of being communists (Hardt, Black, 2002, p. 382).

Despite the fact that the two authors cited here are placed on the terrain of secularized and secular culture, we are once again led to think of the messianic tradition. And for two reasons. The communist society evoked here is characterized by the absence of any conflict and tension or source of conflict and tension. Every contradiction has vanished even in the relationship between the human world and the animal world, and even within the latter there is no longer room for the oppression of the weaker by the stronger. It is the apocatastasis, the *restitutio omnium*, the

regeneration and reconciliation of all creation, of which the Acts of the Apostles speak, for example (3:21), and which then becomes the central theme of the mysticism dear to authors such as Origen, Scotus Erigena, etc. We are brought back to this culture and to these religious expectations for another reason as well. More than a political and social transformation, the miracle of which we are speaking here seems to be the result of the total inner upheaval, of the metanoia that is the presupposition for the realization of messianic expectations: if in Bebel men and women were freed once and for all from the feelings of "hatred" and "revenge", in Bloch from "mercantile morality" and from "all that is most evil in man", Now not only men and women, but all creation, "the animals, Sister Moon, Brother Sun, the birds of the field, the exploited men and the poor, all together" get rid of the "will to power", the "corruption", the "misery of power", to live "in love, and with innocence": the apocatastasis manifests itself in all its splendor!

Communism as a chapter in the history of religions?

Bebel in the second half of the nineteenth, Bloch at the beginning of the twentieth, Hardt and Negri in the early years of the twenty-first century: should the recurrence of messianic tones in authors and movements of Marxist and communist inspiration lead us to read everything as a chapter in the history of religions? There is a very wide range of literature moving in this direction. One need only think of Karl Lowith (1961, p. 48), according to whom Marx's work is "animated by an eschatological faith from the first to the last proposition" and is therefore devoid of

any scientific value. This way of arguing starts from the assumption that highlighting the religious genesis of a thesis would mean liquidating it on the epistemological level. However, it is that assumption that is unfounded. A great philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, unequivocally clarified the link between the advent of the unilinear vision of time and the Judeo-Christian expectation of salvation; But this does not mean that the cyclical view of time is more widely accepted in scientific circles today. If we move from science to politics proper, it seems difficult to deny the contribution made by Christianity (and already by the Hebrew prophets) to the elaboration of the concepts of man and of human rights as such; The fact remains that these concepts are considered more indispensable than ever by a world as profoundly secularized as the one in which we live.

Sometimes the interpreters referred to here believe that they follow in the footsteps of Nietzsche, who never tired of insisting on the links between socialism and Christianity (and Jewish prophecy). However, the situation is exactly the opposite. If, in the eyes of Lowith (ibid.), Marx's theory that "historical materialism is a history of salvation expressed in the language of political economy," for Nietzsche the preaching of the Gospel or the Judeo-Christian tradition, animated as they are from top to bottom by strong social protest and even implacable class hatred, constitute an essential chapter in the history of servile revolt expressed in the language of religion. Far from resolving the revolutionary project in apocalyptic literature (whether Jewish, Christian or Gnostic) without residue, the theorist of aristocratic radicalism believes that "the 'final judgment' [...] it is revolution, as the socialist worker also expects it, only thought a little further away" (Nietzsche, 2002, p. 106). Jesus "was a political delinquent, precisely to the extent that political delinquents were possible in an absurdly impolitic society" (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 36). What

we are witnessing here is not the transcription of the history of socialist movements in terms of sacred history, but, on the contrary, the reading of religious movements themselves in a political-social key. Engels argues in a similar way to Nietzsche. Although taking a clear position in favour of the subaltern classes and thus clearly differing on this point from the theoretician of aristocratic radicalism, speaking of the Peasants' War, Engels writes: "By the Kingdom of God Müntzer meant nothing other than a condition of society in which there are no more class differences and no more private property and a state power autonomous and alien to the members of society" (Mew, 7; 354). If, for Engels, the aspiration to the Kingdom of God did nothing more than express in theological guise the vaguely communist demands of certain social strata, for the interpreters of whom we are speaking, the socialist and communist slogans do nothing more than express, in a superficially secularized form, the traditional religious aspiration to the Kingdom of God.

The juxtaposition of the movement that started from Marx to Christianity is a recurring motif in Engels, and is present in Gramsci (1975, p. 882), who compares the role of Paul of Tarsus to that of Lenin and thus compares "Christianity-Paulinism" with Marxism-Leninism. The juxtaposition, which in many interpreters today would like to be synonymous with the epistemological liquidation of Marxism, refers to the breadth of the mass movement inspired by the two *Weltanschauungen* and the two "parties", to the emotional intensity of the adhesion and tenacity of the attachment shown by the militants, as well as to the long historical cycle of aspirations and agitations of the popular masses in struggle for emancipation. With this nothing is said about the truth or non-truth of the visions of the world compared: the second, in chronological order, may have given a more mature form, on the philosophical and political level, to the demands of social

redemption that in the first were expressed in a more primitive way.

The real problem is to see to what extent, in the passage from more or less religious prophecy to political project, the vision of the historical process of realization and of the characteristics of the new order has become more mature. That is, in a slightly different language and with reference to the construction of post-capitalist society: to what extent has the "evolution of socialism from utopia to science" of which Engels spoke at the end of the nineteenth century come to completion?

All the great revolutions, more precisely all the great revolutionary cycles, have passed through a more or less religious phase. One thinks in particular of the First English Revolution and the followers of the "fifth monarchy", a society that would have been devoid and not in need of legal norms, because individuals would have been enlightened and would have allowed themselves to be guided by divine grace. Or think of the ambition of the revolution French to launch a new calendar, dating events from the year of salvation, identified, however, no longer in the birth of Christ but in the advent of the French Republic, with which it finally ended - according to the words that accompanied the project to reform the calendar - "the common era, the era of cruelty, of lies, of perfidy, of slavery." That is, to take a look outside Europe and the West, let us keep in mind the revolution that shook China in the mid-nineteenth century, inspired by Christianity and waving the messianic motif of the advent of the perpetual "Heavenly Kingdom of Peace".

In order to understand the emphatic and more or less messianic expectations aroused by the great revolutionary movements, it is useful to recall a lesson in method provided by Engels, who, in taking stock of the revolutions in England and France, observed:

In order that at least those conquests of the bourgeoisie which were ripe and ready to be reaped could be secured, it was necessary that the revolution should go beyond its purpose. This seems to be one of the laws of the evolution of bourgeois society (mew, 22; 301).

There is no reason not to apply this lesson in method to the revolutions referred to Marx and Engels and to the revolutionary movement of which they were both the interpreters and the inspirers. It could even be said that the more a revolutionary movement has its roots in the deepest strata of the popular masses, the more it is led to express hopes for redemption which, having been disappointed and frustrated over the centuries, tend to take on particularly emphatic and somewhat messianic tones. Precisely for this reason, after having overthrown the old regime, in order to be able to build a new and relatively stable order, every great revolutionary movement must go through a laborious and contradictory learning process. In this sense, Hegel (1919-20, pp. 896-7) could write that, by putting an end to a period of inconclusive religious and pseudo-revolutionary exaltation and giving a political outlet to a travail of long years, Cromwell showed that he well "knew what it was to govern": to know how to govern meant to be able to give concrete content to ideals which, however great and noble they might be, They had not yet come to terms with reality. Or, to use a different language but still taken from Hegel (1969-79, vol. v, p. 49), the process of learning and learning to govern are the passage from the indeterminate negation, which imagines the new order to be built as the totally Other - a representation proper to the religions of salvation - to the "determined negation" that relocates the revolutionary transformation on the terrain of history and concrete political action.

The messianism of the totally Other



The communist movement has tried at times to escape from the messianism of the totally Other, but without ever completing the operation. There has been no final reckoning with either populism or messianism. I have already drawn attention to the connection that exists between the two phenomena, both of which are an immature expression of the need for redemption of oppressed classes and peoples, inclined, because of the objective conditions in which they live or are forced to suffer, to imagine the new order as the abstract and non-dialectical negation of the existing order: the traditional contempt of the ruling classes for the humble and the poor is reversed in the transfiguration of the humble and the poor and in reserved contempt to ease, to well-being, to wealth as such; while everything that in one way or another can perpetuate domination, oppression, power, hierarchy in all its forms, seems destined to be swallowed up by nothingness. Both aspects of the imagined and longed-for new order are the result of an abstract and non-dialectical negation. As far as the first aspect is concerned, the new is reduced to very little: the condition of scarcity becomes general and is (or should be) well accepted by all; We are grappling with populism. As far as the second aspect is concerned, yes, at least in appearance the change is radical, but it is so radical that the juridical-political order, rather than experiencing a change and a transformation, limits itself to disappearing once and for all; We are grappling with messianism.

We have seen Bloch abandon himself, in the first edition of *Spirit of Utopia*, to the messianic expectation of the "transformation of power into

love", a transformation that was in reality a vanishing of "all that is most evil in man", a disappearance of power, of private interest and of the norms and institutions called to contain and regulate both. In the second edition of his

book, Bloch erases these exalted passages, but this does not mean that he proceeds to a reckoning with messianism.

Nor does the communist movement as a whole. In the Soviet Union, until the eve of its collapse, the ruling party continued to preach wearily, and with zero credibility, the catechism of the extinction of the state, the nation, religion, etc. In doing so, he referred to Marx and Engels; In fact, the messianic tendency is not absent in them, but in the communist movement, starting with the apocalyptic experience of the First World War, it has been strongly accentuated. In mocking the anarchists and "anti-authoritarians" and refuting their "crusade" against the "principle of authority" as such, Engels resorts to arguments which in fact undermine the thesis of the extinction of the state. He gives the example of a ship in danger of sinking and whose salvation depends on the "instantaneous and absolute obedience of all to the will of one." The article On Authority, which I am quoting here, continues: "When I put such arguments to the most furious anti-authoritarians, they could only answer me this: 'Ah! That is true, but this is not an authority that we give to the delegates, but an office!' These gentlemen think they changed things when they changed their names." But a simple change of name also suggests the transition (in which the hoped-for extinction of the state consists) from political power to purely administrative functions; all the more so since it is Engels himself who observes that there is an authority and even a "despotism independent of any social organization," as is demonstrated, in addition to the example of the ship, by the concrete reality of the functioning of large-scale industry and the public services of the modern state (Mew, 18; 305-7).

With regard to the problem I am analyzing, one may find in Engels a symptom of perplexity that is perhaps even more significant. In 1884, in warning against the grave dangers inherent in the process of militarization under way,

he observed: "It is enough to look at our Europe today, in which the class struggle and competition in conquests has brought public power [die öffentliche Macht] to a height from which it threatens to swallow [verschlingen] the whole of society and even the state" (ibid., 21; 166). Here the disappearance of the State, its swallowing up by a monstrous power that is not properly the State and that seems to be expressed directly by civil society, far from being experienced as a promise, looms like a nightmare. These nuances and vacillations disappear in the period in which communism is more or less immediately under the impression of the tragedy of the First World War. In *State and Revolution*, after reproducing the passage just quoted in full, Lenin summarizes it and actually amends it as follows: "A voracious state power 'threatens to swallow up' all the forces of society" (ibid., 25; 370). In fact, Engels expresses himself here in obscure terms. Yet, if properly investigated, that passage can throw a beam of light on a very interesting phenomenon. There are situations in which the state can act as a brake, even if partial, to the unlimited violence unleashed by civil society: to give just one example, in the USA of white supremacy it was civil society hegemonized by white racists that unleashed the hunt for the black, not infrequently taken from prison by an angry mob and thus removed from state justice and subjected to torture and lynching staged as popular and extra-legal justice. But, in the climate of (justified) indignation at the carnage of the First World War and at those bloodthirsty Molochs who had practically become the states engaged in the conflict, there was no room for too subtle distinctions and arguments.

A general remark can be made: Marx and Engels sometimes speak of "the extinction of the state in the present political sense," sometimes of the "extinction of the state" as such; For a long time, the twentieth-century communist movement took up exclusively the second

formula, which is clearly messianic (Losurdo, 1997b, pp. 185-7). It is a utopia that, under certain objective conditions, can turn into its opposite, as happened in the course of the twentieth century, starting from a dialectic brilliantly foreseen and described by Marx and Engels in the course of their polemic against anarchism: pushed to the extreme, anti-authoritarianism, making it impossible to make any decision according to general rules and based on consensus and democratic control, in fact, it ends up favouring the exercise of arbitrary power by a small minority; The so-called "anti-authoritarianism" is thus overturned into "barracks communism" (Mew, 18; 425).

A similar dialectic can also develop for the national question: Marx warned against universalism or abstract internationalism, which may well turn into an exalted chauvinism; Yes, the "denial of nationalities" and their assimilation to "outdated prejudices" can in reality mean the claim of their "absorption" into a presumed "model nation" (ibid., 31; 218-19). On the basis of these considerations and concerns, Engels emphasized: there are nations (the oppressed ones) that "have not only the right but also the duty to be national even before being international" (ibid., 35; 271); More exactly, their internationalism is expressed in the promotion of struggles for national liberation.

And yet, for years the Communist International posed as a "world Bolshevik party" that perhaps would even have had at its disposal a "proletarian Red Army", itself worldwide (Losurdo, 2013, pp. 158-62): there was no question of the danger that such exalted internationalism, which looked with disdain at borders and national identities as "outdated prejudices", could result in the celebration and consecration of a "model nation" (to use the language again by Marx).

## The Messianism of Waiting

Sometimes, rather than prefiguring a future with more or less determined contents, messianism manifests itself as an indeterminate expectation of the totally Other. The emblematic figure of this second form of messianism is Walter Benjamin. To understand it, it is necessary to make a premise. In "scientific socialism" the transition from utopia to science is guaranteed by two historical turning points, that is, by two revolutions of different kinds. The political revolution and in particular the French revolutionary cycle from 1789 to 1871, from the overthrow of the old regime to the Paris Commune, showed that the new ideas of emancipation could advance concretely thanks to the political action of real social forces. In turn, the industrial revolution and the related development of the productive forces gave impetus and plausibility to the project of realizing a new political-social order based not only on a more equitable distribution but also and even before that on a rapid and incessant increase in social wealth: it was possible to put an end once and for all to misery and scarcity, as well as exploitation and oppression. But what was the point of thinking of emancipation by referring to "science" at a time when the military victories of the Third Reich and the enslavement of entire peoples were irresistible, and when the shadow of the "final solution" loomed ever more menacingly on the horizon? In 1940, and before voluntarily facing death to escape his persecutors, Walter Benjamin (1982b) warned in his Theses on the Philosophy of History that the industrial revolution and the political revolution did not converge towards the realization of an overall project of emancipation. The "advances in the domination of nature" and in the "exploitation of nature" (from which Hitler's Germany and its formidable war machine benefited also, and perhaps in

the first place) could go hand in hand with fearful "regressions of society". In any case, it was necessary to break with "historicism" and free oneself from the illusion, which had had disastrous consequences, of "swimming with the current" of history (Theses 11 and 16). No, by recovering the dimension of "messianic time" and treasuring in some way Jewish messianism, it was necessary to realize that "every second" is "the little door through which the Messiah could enter" (Thesis 18).

The critique of positivistic evolutionism had been the leitmotif of Lenin's thought and action, which had branded the impotence or, worse, the accommodation of the Second International to the chauvinism that prevailed during the First World War. And in denouncing this catastrophe, Bukharin, also expressing the orientation of the Bolshevik leadership as a whole, had drawn attention to the fact that, in the context of capitalism, technological progress was feeding a "horrid corpse factory" (cf. above, p. 38). On the other hand, Benjamin explicitly directed his polemic against "Social-Democracy" and "vulgar Marxism" (Theses 11); When he denounced the evolutionary "school," so intoxicated by the beauty of the ineluctable future that it lost sight of the terrible challenges of the present, the school from which the working class had unlearned "both hatred and the will to sacrifice" (Thesis 12), he was certainly not thinking of the communist movement.

And yet, the positive opposition of messianism to evolutionism is far from convincing, not least because it stemmed from a historical balance sheet that was cut off on the spatial and temporal levels. If not in the West, at least outside of it, gigantic movements of openly messianic inspiration had developed in the preceding decades. We already know about <dei> the Taiping Revolution that broke out in China in the mid-nineteenth century and was inspired <by Christianity>, which called for the advent of an eternal reign of peace and justice. Well, did messianism

(of Christian origin) play a positive or negative role on that occasion? The movement we are talking about here was animated by the "consciousness of blowing up the continuum of history" which, according to Benjamin (Thesis 13), characterizes the authentic "revolutionary classes at the moment of their action" and which not by chance pushes the French revolution to introduce "a new calendar". The Taipings also introduce a new calendar. Hong Xiuquan proclaims 1851 as Year 1 of the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace. Unfortunately, the messianic expectation of an entirely new world, unrelated to the old world of injustice, privilege, debauchery, and sin, had resulted in one of the greatest tragedies in universal history (see below, pp. 153-4). Similar considerations can be made for the great anti-colonial revolution, which about two decades later broke out in present-day Sudan and which was led by the Mahdi, the Messiah of the Islamic tradition called to make good and peace reign at the end of time. In China, redemption came about thanks to a communist party that was able to avoid both evolutionism and messianism; In the Middle East, the martyrdom of the Palestinian people and the overall tragedy of the Islamic world are characterized by the oscillation between (evolutionary) reliance on the benevolence of the West and its leading country and abandonment to the persistent messianic vision of the return of the Prophet or at least of the Caliphate he ultimately founded.

On closer inspection, messianism had also played an important role in Europe, and in the Russian Revolution to be exact. Stimulated by tsarist oppression and above all by the horror of the First World War, messianism had already manifested itself forcefully on the occasion of the February Revolution: hailing it as an Easter of resurrection, Christian circles and important sectors of Russian society had expected a total regeneration from it, with the emergence of an intimately unified community and the disappearance

of the division between rich and poor, and even theft, lying, gambling, blasphemy, drunkenness (Figes, 2000, p. 434). As we know, messianism did not disappear with the coming to power of the Bolsheviks. Subsequently, it had been at least to some extent surpassed; The dreams of universal, total and indeterminate regeneration had been replaced, amidst errors of all kinds and tragic conflicts, by the work of building the post-capitalistic society, and it was this construction that then made it possible to block once and for all the triumphant advance of Nazism desperately denounced by Benjamin shortly before his death: "And this enemy has not ceased to win" (Thesis 6).

And yet, in our day, the enduring echo of the horror of Nazi-fascism, the tortuous and tragic history of "real socialism" and its subsequent defeat in Eastern Europe seem to restore relevance to Benjamin's vision. It makes us think of the expectation of the revolutionary and in some way salvific "event" (*événement*) that is at the center of the thought of a courageous French communist philosopher. The "event" is thought of in opposition to historical objectivity and the historical process: "event versus state of affairs" also means "eternity versus history" (Badiou, 2006, p. 182). Also in this case, as in Benjamin's, there is no lack of religious echoes. The advent and spread of Christianity have in some way a paradigmatic value: "At the heart of Christianity is the event, situated [*situé*, placed in a well-defined spatiotemporal context] and exemplary, which is the death of the Son of God on the cross" (Badiou, 1988, p. 235). The event that makes us foresee communism - Žižek adds - is like Pascal's *Deus absconditus* that reveals itself only to those who seek it and who are already sustained by faith.

Unfortunately, like the expectation of the Messiah, the expectation of the (communist) Event also has a formal character, it can be filled with the most diverse contents. The event can be pointed to the "insurrection in Tahir



Square", read by Žižek (2013, pp. 166-8) "as a sign of the (communist) future". However, the insurrection that in 2011 overthrew Hosni Mubarak's decades-long autocracy in Egypt has the profane, i.e. complex and contradictory, course of the other revolutions: the moment of choral unity, which characterizes the overthrow of the ancient regime, is followed by the sharpening first and then the explosion of the internal contradictions of the revolutionary bloc. It is a clash that has so far resulted in the establishment of a military dictatorship. Why should the "insurrection in Tahir Square" be interpreted as a kind of sacred date in the communist calendar?

Speaking at a conference chaired by Badiou and Žižek, a group of participants evoked an "event in the strongest and most philosophical sense of the term" that had illuminated the second half of the twentieth century: it was the emergence and affirmation in Poland of . Solidarnosc which, we are assured, was at the beginning an authentically communist movement, precisely for this reason opposed to the prevailing "state communism" ("Goldex Poldex", 2011, pp. 106-8). The reasons for the subsequent evolution that led Solidarity to support neoliberalism at the domestic level and the sovereign interventions of the West and NATO at the international level are not explained. But that's not the most important point. Others could have pointed to that conference as the Event par excellence, in this or that event in one corner or another of the world, for example in Gorbachev's perestroika or in Deng Xiaoping's rise to power in China, which was beginning to free hundreds of millions of people from hunger, thus fulfilling the promises of redemption that had accompanied and illuminated the decades of heroic struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party. Messianism, on the one hand, is affected by formalism, on the other hand, it risks surrounding in a sacred aura a historical

event sovereignly and arbitrarily identified as the Event par excellence

Although entirely marked by the condemnation of violence (and even of power as such) and the distancing from the illusion of violence as a "means to just ends", the early text of 1920-21, *For the Critique of Violence*, concludes with a tribute to "pure divine violence". Its model would be the "judgment of God on the tribe of Korah", the somewhat aristocratic rebel who, according to the biblical account (Numbers, 16), contests Moses' leadership and is swallowed up, together with his tribe and his possessions, by a chasm that opens up in the earth. The celebration of "immediate pure violence", of "pure or divine violence", of violence that "annihilates" (Benjamin, 1982a, pp. 5 and 26-7), is rather disturbing, but it is a theological and messianic way of escape from a situation in which everything is violence, and violence in which it is difficult or impossible to make meaningful distinctions.

Ah, if only Badiou had read Togliatti!

After the "end of history" and even more so of the communist movement and Marxism, for some time rashly proclaimed by the victors of the Cold War, today we are witnessing a revival of interest in Marx and a revival of the idea of communism. Unfortunately, it is a revival and revival that does not bother to draw a historical balance and completely ignores the process of learning that has taken place in the context of the communist movement in a laborious and moreover incomplete way. Already very difficult because of the objective situation (the devastation of the First World War, the civil war and foreign intervention in it, an international situation full of dangers),

the problem of the transition from the state of exception to normality and the progressive transformation of the state in a democratic direction resulting from the October Revolution was made even more problematic or impossible by the expectation of the extinction of the state and of political power as such. It was necessary to enact a new constitution and a new legislative system, but here are revolutionary socialists and circles influenced by anarchism proclaiming that "law is opium for the people" (in Bloch, 1961, p. 253) and that "the idea of a constitution is a bourgeois idea" (in Carr, 1964, p. 128). Given these assumptions, on the one hand any attempt at legal and constitutional regulation was branded as a betrayal of the original idea and a regression towards the *ancien régime*; On the other hand, in the effort to deal with the emergency, it was easy to justify any measure, however radical or terrorist it might be. The tragic experience of total war and the bloodthirsty Moloch role played by the states engaged in the gigantic conflict had mightily strengthened anarchist tendencies, and these in turn made it very difficult, if not impossible, to acquire the strengths of the liberal-democratic tradition. A dialectic was taking place whereby the state of exception (provoked by the war) radicalized the utopia of the disappearance of the state and power as such, and this abstract utopia further stiffened and made the state of exception insurmountable.

Nevertheless, a learning process quickly took place, even if it was incomplete and unfolded not at the general theoretical level but mainly in practice or in judgments on concrete developments in Soviet Russia. As early as June 7, 1919, Gramsci (1987, pp. 56-8) paid homage to Lenin and the Bolsheviks not as protagonists of a process destined to lead to the extinction of the state, but as "the greatest statesman in contemporary Europe" and "an aristocracy of statesmen that no other nation possesses"; they had the merit of saving the state and the nation from the anarchist

catastrophe and dissolution caused by war and the ignorance of the ruling classes.

A few years later we see Lenin himself, in the last phase of his evolution and life, turning his attention not to the problem of how to promote the extinction of the state but to the task of "improving our state apparatus," of proceeding with the "construction of the state," with the construction of a "truly new state apparatus that truly deserves the name of socialist." of Soviets." It was an awareness accompanied by an important warning. To neglect the task of building a new state was ultimately to perpetuate or prolong the survival of the old tsarist state apparatus: "We must eliminate all traces of what Tsarist Russia and its bureaucratic and capitalist apparatus have bequeathed to such a large extent to our apparatus." Or, one could say in a different language: the dwelling on the idea of the extinction of the State favored the overturning of utopia into dystopia (in Losurdo, 1997b, pp. 189-90).

About a decade later, Stalin attributed to the Soviet state the function of suppressing the counter-revolution and common crime at home and defending the country internationally. But he listed a "third function, the work of economic organization and the cultural and educational work of the organs of our State"< (Losurdo, 2008, pp. 64-9)>.

As can be seen, in Soviet Russia the practice of government soon enough meant the farewell to the idea of the extinction of the state. This is even more true for a country like the People's Republic of China, which did not have the apocalyptic experience of the First World War behind it. In September 1954, Mao Zedong (1979, p. 170) called for the struggle to "build a great socialist state." About two years later he went to the threshold of the critique of the idea of the extinction of the state even on the more strictly theoretical level:

The organs of our state are organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Let's take the courts, they serve to keep the counter-revolution at bay, but they do not have this task exclusively, they have to settle many disputes that arise within the people. Apparently, even in ten thousand years' time, there will be tribunals, because even after the elimination of classes there will be contradictions between what is advanced and what is backward, there will still be strife and quarrels among men, there will be all kinds of disorders: without courts, where would we go? However, the struggle will have changed its nature, it will be different from the class struggle. The nature of the courts will also change (ibid., p. 451).

We are not speaking here of the state as such, but of the "courts," about which, however, it is explicitly stated that "they are organs of our state," and that these organs will continue to exist even "ten thousand years from now."

Contrary to certain superficial interpretations widespread in the West, the idea of the extinction of the state was not even agitated by the Cultural Revolution, which on the contrary was launched starting from the purpose of affirming the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore the state power of the revolutionary class also on the cultural level. In the words of the Report to the Ninth National Congress of the CCP, read by Lin Piao but drafted by Mao or under his direction, it was a matter of "taking back that part of power usurped by the bourgeoisie, exercising the total dictatorship of the proletariat in the superstructure, including all sectors of culture" (Lin Piao, 1969, p. 30). It is true, however, that Mao moved away from the thesis of the extinction of the State in a more radical and almost explicit way in the years in which he committed himself to distinguishing the "contradictions within the people" <(cf. Losurdo, 2013, pp. 255-7)> from the antagonistic ones, that is, in the years in which he was concerned with restricting the area of repression as much as possible.

Marx's brilliant analysis of the dialectic developed at the most critical moment of the French revolution is famous: in danger of being overwhelmed by internal reaction and

aggression by the powers of the ancien régime, it can only be saved by appealing to the mass enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice of the citizens and by energetic interventions in the sphere of private property. which nevertheless continues to be considered inviolable, just as the "private interest" of the individual continues to be proclaimed sacred and inviolable. In summary, one can formulate this judgment on the French revolution of the Jacobin period: "His revolutionary praxis stands in flagrant contradiction with his theory [...] But praxis is only the exception, and theory is the rule" (mew, i; 366-7).

No less acute, but of a different character, is the contradiction between theory and practice which manifests itself in the October Revolution (and, to a lesser extent, in the other revolutions which have appealed to socialism and communism). The theory of the extinction of the state was undermined by the need imposed by practice to put an end to the process of balkanization of Russia, to defeat the internal reaction and intervention of the <e> counter-revolutionary powers, to consolidate and broaden the social base of consensus through the initiation of a process of realization of the rule of law and democratization of the new state institutions. Unfortunately, the failure to come to terms with extinction theory has made this much more difficult in practice.

The learning process was prolonged, uncertain and not without fluctuations. In the history of "real socialism", the problem of the rule of law began to emerge only much later, with the advent of Deng Xiaoping to the leadership of China, after a Cultural Revolution, also moved by the conviction of the "formal" and scarcely significant character of liberal freedom (Deng Xiaoping, 1991-95, vol. III, pp. 166-7). In the more mature communist parties of the West, the elaboration has gone further. Reference can be made here to Togliatti's aforementioned controversy with Bobbio. As we know, even more than for its

narrowness, which disregarded material needs and the economic sphere, liberal freedom was harshly criticized for its exclusion clauses (to the detriment of colonial peoples in particular). For the rest, the communist leader emphasized that "rights of freedom and social rights" had both become the "patrimony" of the communist movement (cf. above, p. 74). Obviously, the timing and methods of implementation of both depended on the concrete situation and on the greater or lesser bitterness of the conflict on the internal and international level; But strategically, it was not a question of choosing between them.

Totally disregarding this instructive chapter of history, Badiou (2009, p. 195) unleashes a hymn to the "extinction of the state" and the "transition to the non-state." But without the State, without the rule of law and the administration of justice, without those 'courts' whose existence and permanence were invoked and envisaged by Mao Zedong himself, how is it possible to guarantee the freedom of the individual? The answer to this problem is disconcerting: "Justice is more important than freedom" (Badiou, 2011a, p. 38), "justice is the goal" of "classical revolutionary politics", beginning with the "great Jacobins of 1792", with "our great Jacobin ancestors" (ibid., pp. 40 and 42). One would want to sigh: ah, if Badiou had read Togliatti and his praise of the "rights of freedom" as well as "social rights"! If on the philosophical level it represents a regression, on the historiographical level this stance proves to be remarkably nonchalant. The Jacobins scarcely interested in the cause of liberty? At the end of the eighteenth century, the "black Jacobins", with the support of the Jacobins who ruled in Paris, were the protagonists of one of the greatest battles for freedom in world history: they overthrew slavery and colonial rule at the same time; and later defended these conquests by defeating the mighty army sent by Napoleon.

Not unlike Badiou, argues Žižek (2011a, p. 309), who condemns "the states of really existing socialism" for being states and for having thus betrayed communism, which "is anti-state by its very definition." However, this emphatic anti-statism results in the celebration of "divine violence." Of course, it is a reason <, as we have just seen, > dear to Walter Benjamin <.> The most modern examples of "divine violence" adduced by Žižek (2009b, p. 203) are "the Revolutionary Terror of 1792-1794" and "the Red Terror of 1919, etc." It is an unavoidable violence because it is imposed by a tragic situation: in both cases the choice is made between the violence of the ancien régime and the aggression of the counter-revolutionary powers on the one hand and the violence of the revolution and national defense on the other. But is it a "divine" violence? Whatever the meaning attributed to the adjective, it risks reducing the negativity and horror inherent in the noun to a bauble. Attributing a divine character to violence is not the best way to stimulate its limitation and cessation as quickly as possible. Moreover, this attribution favors a Manichean reading of the conflict, and this is completely <è> misleading on the level of historical reconstruction and completely inadmissible as far as moral judgment is concerned: "the revolutionary terror of 1792-1794" can well be considered inevitable and legitimate, but this does not mean that we are authorized to extend this judgment to every single act of this terror. As we would be forced to do in some way if we spoke of "divine violence," which by definition excludes the moment of accidentality, excess, and individual arbitrariness.

In conclusion: the idea of the extinction of the state, to which the "radical left" continues to be attached, should be the antidote to the violence of twentieth-century communism; but it now throws open the door to a "divine violence" incapable of making distinctions and limitations even in Benjamin.



The absence of a historical balance, the will to proceed as if there had never been a communist movement with its mistakes, its tragedies, but also its rich learning process, all this is only a source of catastrophes. This does not only apply to the problem of the state and its extinction. Take the national question. We have seen Marx and Engels point out that emphatic but abstract internationalism may well be reversed into the chauvinism of the "model nation." Now let us read how the "radical left" of our day argues: what is needed is "a proletarian or popular political force, directly international. Here we find an original point of Marx's which we absolutely must reconstitute. The national limitation of the revolutions of the twentieth century has been one of the great weaknesses of the communist idea" (Badiou, 2011b, p. 20). Instead, a "radical internationalism" is required: "the time has come to be subjectively planetary militants" (ibid., p. 22). It would like to be a new and original position. In reality, we are led to think of a chapter in the history of the Third Communist International, which in its early years, not having yet become aware of the national question, called itself the "world Bolshevik party", as if the differences between nations and national identities themselves had vanished. In the vision of the French philosopher the "planetary militants" take the place of the militants of the "world Bolshevik Party", but without even questioning the reasons why the latter considered at a certain point to pay more attention to the national question and to deal with the "national nihilism", impeached by Dimitrov in 1935 on the occasion of the seventh Congress (the last) of the Third Communist International. Those were the years in which, launched as it was into the colonization and enslavement of Eastern Europe, Nazism made the national question more acute than ever even outside the colonial world proper. Around the same time, from prison, Gramsci (1975, pp. 1729 and 866) invited us not to lose sight of an essential truth: a communist had to know how to

"purify internationalism of every vague and purely ideological element" in order to be "profoundly national."

It was a great lesson. And yet, decades later, Leonid Brezhnev in the Soviet Union stood as a champion of the theory that, at least within the "socialist camp," the narrow principle of respect for national sovereignty had been superseded once and for all by proletarian and communist internationalism. It was a thesis that de facto consecrated the right of the USSR to "fraternal" intervention in this or that "brother" country; and again, on the basis of the dialectic already brilliantly analyzed by Marx, the so-called internationalism was reversed into the chauvinism of the great power. Immediately after the dissolution of the "socialist camp" and the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro came to the conclusion: "We socialists have made a mistake in underestimating the power of nationalism and religion" (Schlesinger Jr., 1992, p. 25). It should be borne in mind that religion itself can be an essential part of the construction of national identity, as happened for example in Poland, which was the first to rebel against the Soviet "model nation".

Badiou is not alone in arguing in the way we have seen. At the beginning of our century, two books written together met with extraordinary success, in which we can read the thesis according to which in today's world a substantially unified bourgeoisie on a planetary level would be opposed to a "multitude" itself unified by the disappearance of state and national barriers (Hardt, Blacks, 2002, 2004). But it is interesting how one of the two authors behaved on the occasion of the war against Yugoslavia:

We must recognize that this is not an action of American imperialism. It is in fact an international (or, indeed, supranational) operation. And its goals are not driven by the narrow national interests of the United States: it is actually aimed at protecting human rights (or, indeed, human life) (Elardt, 1999).

This legitimized a war unleashed without the authorization of the UN Security Council. And it is only the US and the West that are granted this sovereign right: the supposed theoretician of internationalism turned out to be a champion of American (and Western) chauvinism.

Return to "utopian socialism"? A quixotic enterprise

Precisely because it is the expression of classes and peoples placed in privileged or dominant positions, liberalism is largely immune to populism and messianism; In this sense, the movements of social and national emancipation can and must learn from it but, of course, not in order to deny themselves but to achieve greater maturity and effectiveness. However, after the tragedies of the twentieth century and the defeat suffered by socialism in Eastern Europe, there are not a few voices that invite us to return to utopia, and therefore to cling to a tradition of thought that is affected both by messianism (imagining a bright future absolutely free of contradictions and conflicts), and by populism (getting rid of state and political superfetations and having the opportunity to express itself in its spontaneous moral excellence, The people can finally build a kingdom of peace and justice.) These are invitations that urge us to go backwards along the path from utopian socialism to scientific socialism, which was theorized and hoped for by Engels.

The first step should be the repudiation of the state and power as such, this source of contamination from which we must keep our distance. It is an approach common to mass movements, such as the one led in Mexico by Subcomandante Marcos, and to famous philosophers:

today, a book that already in its title calls for "changing the world without taking power" (Holloway, 2004) enjoys great success on the Western left. Badiou (2010, p. 112), who, with a sigh of relief, hails "the collapse of state communism," and Zizek (2009b, p. 258), who harbors tenderness for movements demanding the "abolition of the state," participate in this vision.

It is a pity that even in this case a question that should be elementary and inescapable is completely absent: in the course of history have socialist experiments conducted from below and, at least apparently, outside the state and in controversy with it achieved better results and with lower social and human costs? Before answering this question, it should be noted that the distinction between socialism or 'state communism' and non-'state' socialism or communism is by no means obvious and does not need explanation, as it would seem at first sight. Let us take the great insurrection which we have already dealt with: in China the Taiping rise up against the power of the Manchu dynasty but, in turn, in the territories gradually conquered, they constitute themselves as a state opposed to the existing one. The socialism of which they are protagonists targets the state (to be overthrown) while being at the same time "of the state" (the one in the process of being built); It is a socialism that takes shape in one direction from below, in another direction from above. On closer inspection, this has been the hallmark of Chinese socialism for the two decades leading up to the Communist Party's conquest of power on a national scale. What differentiates the Taiping period (1851-64) and the first phase of Maoist China (1928-49) is therefore not the absence or presence of the state. If anything, we can speak in the first case of utopian socialism and in the second of scientific socialism (more careful than the first to identify and attract to itself the social and political forces capable of supporting the

revolution and leading it to victory). So let's see how Taiping actually behave. They make themselves champions of the principle of equality (also between men and women) and "constitute a community system in which no one owns his own property, where the individual is strictly organized, where, after the suppression of all private commerce, the indispensable individual needs are guaranteed by the collective, where power is theocratic." It is a theocracy that, while enacting courageous and incisive reforms, mercilessly strikes at all those who continue to indulge in luxury and discretionary consumption (not only opium but also tobacco and alcohol), licentious sexual life (prostitution, homosexuality, adultery), heresy and idolatry on the religious level. If the rigidly egalitarian platform <provoca> "the hostility of the middle and small proprietors", the Puritan zeal further erodes the social base of consensus, all the more so because the revolutionary leaders, more exposed to temptations because of the exercise of power, fail to live up to the rigid norms imposed by them (Gernet, 1978, pp. 514-20; Mirsky, 1996, pp. 39-42).

Quite different is the orientation that inspires the government of the "liberated" areas in China, i.e. controlled by the Communist Party even before the foundation of the People's Republic of China: trade banned by the Taiping is now being developed to the maximum, also in order to break the siege decreed by Chiang Kai-shek (Snow, 1967, p. 285); the most diverse forms of property (private, cooperative, public) coexist; Mao harshly polemicized against what he called "absolute egalitarianism." These are problems which I shall deal with in more detail later. For now, I will confine myself to drawing attention to the tragedy of the Taiping Rebellion and the civil war that followed: 20 million deaths! If we bear in mind that the population of China at the time amounted to less than a third of what it is today, we must conclude that the

experiment in utopian socialism, in which immediate moral (and religious) inspiration prevails over the political project, was perhaps the most catastrophic chapter in the thousand-year history of the great Asian country.

Do we want to deal only with utopian socialism, which has always been far from the exercise of power? We have already seen Fourier's disciples commit themselves to building a community characterized by the sharing of goods and mutual solidarity, but in Algeria, on the land taken from the Arabs, <the latter are> expropriated, deported and often decimated or annihilated. Probably without knowing it and without wanting to, these French followers of utopian socialism were complicit in the policy of robbery and terror implemented by the colonial expansionism of the government in Paris.

Unfortunately, the enemies of socialism or "state communism" have learned nothing from this tragic misadventure. Among them are two acclaimed authors of the radical left, who express their boundless enthusiasm for the "tradition of the kibbutz, based on community relations" (Hardt, Blacks, 2012., p. 66). There is no doubt that these were "community relations" lived with spiritual intensity and interwoven with noble intentions; But they developed under the banner of a "socialism for the people of the lords" that totally ignored the rights of the Arabs, who were dispossessed, marginalized and subjected to ethnic cleansing (cf. above, pp. 79-80). The adherents of the "kibbutz tradition" were not substantially different from the followers of Fourier on Algerian soil: in both cases, utopian socialism, which supposedly springs spontaneously and freely from certain sectors of civil society, turns out to be no better than the despised socialism or "state communism."

Moreover, we have not yet asked ourselves the essential question: is there really a socialism or communism that is not "state-based"? The socialism enacted by Fourier's

disciples or by the Zionists organized in the kibbutzim was built on land wrested from the Arabs by state violence. It was still a state socialism, to be exact it was a socialism built thanks to a state engaged in colonial expansionism, while the protagonist of Soviet socialism was a state called to save the nation from semi-colonial domination or ruthless colonial enslavement to which it had been destined respectively by the liberal West and Nazi Germany.

Of course, it can also happen that socialism is built at least initially in opposition to the existing state (but still with the intrinsic tendency to realize a new state power, to make itself a state). Even such socialism is by no means an antidote to violence and repression. This is particularly clearly confirmed by the experience of the Spanish Revolution. In this case, we are dealing with violence exercised not against the colonial peoples (the Arabs), but against the wealthy classes. The military revolt in 1936, unleashed and directed by Francisco Franco, provoked in the humblest strata of the population an "explosion of blind millenarian revenge (the resentment accumulated over centuries of oppression)", stimulated the "disorganized terror" coming from below and carried out "in spite of, not because of, the republican authorities". It was a largely spontaneous violence, in which the protagonists were masses exasperated by the misery, degradation, and humiliation inflicted on them for an interminable period of time. Fanning the flames was the "anarchist movement," which clashed with state power, aimed at a collectivism disdainful of any form of legal regulation, and dreamed of what we might call utopian socialism. It was not only military and police forces suspected of being complicit in the fascist uprising who were targeted by the violence. They were also "the rich, the bankers, the industrialists and the landlords"; above all, it was the clergy, the backbone of an extraordinarily rich Church ready to defend the cause of wealth as such (Preston, 2012, pp. xiii-xiv), who were

struck "with the greatest ferocity". The rejection of the state did not stop halfway: there was a widespread conviction that "popular justice needed neither lawyers nor judges". Likened to a 'nest of vipers', the buildings relating to the administration of justice were set on fire together with the judicial archives; The opening of prison doors and the release of prisoners, all of whom were considered victims of injustice and oppression, went hand in hand with the punishment of those allegedly responsible for this injustice and oppression: "More than a hundred judges were murdered." Violence was unleashed in its immediacy. The fact is that "anarchists saw the immediate physical annihilation of the enemy, without the formalities of the trial, as the basis of a revolutionary new utopian order," of a "libertarian communism" based on the "abolition of money and property," as well as of the state (ibid., pp. 238-40, 248-9 and 259).

The least that can be said is that utopian socialism is not synonymous with innocence. Even if it comes mostly from the theorists of conservatism, the critical warning about the possible overthrow of utopia into dystopia should not be dismissed lightly. If anything, it must be applied across the board, and in a very special way for the utopia dear to today's imperialism, which claims to achieve perpetual peace through a series of wars, each more devastating than the last, on the material and spiritual planes, and all harbingers of further wars on a larger scale. In any case, not even socialism from below, which would like to be at a distance and sheltered from the state, can escape this critical warning. For this reason alone, it is legitimate or necessary to be skeptical of the slogan of a return to utopian socialism.

Critical elements of this tradition of thought, in addition to Marx and Engels, can also be found in Benjamin, who, in his Theses on the Philosophy of History, summarizes the



most problematic aspects of the thought of one of the most important exponents of utopian socialism as follows:

According to Fourier, well-ordered social work would have the effect that four moons would illuminate the earth's night, that ice would retreat from the poles, that the water of the sea would no longer taste of salt, that wild animals would enter the service of men! (Thesis 11).

Reading this text, one is assailed by a doubt: are we in the presence of a utopia or dystopia? Today's awareness of the dramatic nature of the ecological question makes the gigantic manipulation of nature envisaged here seem senseless and fatal. Compared with Fourier's time, the advances in natural science and the beneficial or painful historical experiences connected with these advances allow us to draw a more precise line of demarcation between what is achievable and what is unrealizable, between transformations of a positive sign and transformations of a decidedly negative sign. In other words, in addition to not being the recovery of lost innocence and having a rather vague and indeterminate content, the proclaimed return to utopian socialism is a quixotic enterprise: we are unable to return to the past, under no circumstances could we succeed in stripping ourselves of the scientific and historical knowledge acquired in the meantime.

Scientific socialism has two revolutions behind it, or the full unfolding of the effects of two revolutions: the industrial revolution (with the associated powerful development of the productive forces) and the political revolution, which in France had brought about an unprecedented transformation of political and social relations. From here, it was possible to think of the definitive overcoming of the misery and mass scarcity which, again for an author like Tocqueville, were imposed by nature and even by Providence. The concrete historical process had shown that, for the achievement of this objective, both the productive potential (highlighted by the

industrial revolution) and the political potential (evidenced by the political action and intervention of the masses during the French revolutionary cycle) were available. After the two revolutions (industrial and political), the radical emancipation of mankind turned out to be a perfectly realistic goal: it was only necessary to investigate the times and methods of the emancipation process. Even if it was an investigation that was not easy and that indeed involved a long, tiring and contradictory process of learning and a continuous, renewed historical balance of the struggles gradually conducted and the experiences gradually completed, the passage of the emancipation project from utopia to science was nevertheless acquired.

The moment of crisis of this vision occurred between the two world wars. What was the point of talking about scientific socialism in the years when the unleashing of the imperialist war and then the rise of Nazi-fascism could enjoy mass consensus? Benjamin's life ended tragically at the very moment when the analysis-prediction formulated by Carl Schmitt (1985, pp. 88-9) already in the 1920s proved to be unfortunately precise: as the victory of fascism in Italy demonstrated, the "myth of the class struggle" was destined to be defeated by a "national" movement in which, in addition to language, "race and lineage" (*Rasse und Abstammung*) played an essential role in culture and tradition. While the blackest reaction triumphed, where was the political potential of the emancipation process highlighted by the French revolutionary cycle? And what was the point of talking about scientific socialism in the years when the Industrial Revolution seemed to have found its main interpreter and beneficiary in the Third Reich which, achieving one victory after another, proceeded to the enslavement of entire peoples? Precisely in 1940, the year in which Benjamin, after writing his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, was on his way to death, Heidegger (1975, p. 205) was able to

proclaim triumphantly that the successes of Hitler's Blitzkrieg were nothing accidental: the country which, thanks to the completeness of its nihilism, had gone further than any other in the organization of the "economy of the machine" and could therefore aspire to "establish unconditional domination over the world." earth'. Along with the political potential, the productive potential of the emancipation process had also disappeared.

It is in this context that Benjamin's reflection must be placed. His Theses on the Philosophy of History shatter the positivistic scientific socialism of the Second International, but they are not a return to utopian socialism and to the "fantasies that contributed so much to making people laugh at Fourier" (Theses 11). Whether or not the author of these Theses is fully aware of it, we are not in the presence of an escape into an irretrievably past past but of a development of the learning process, with sometimes convincing results, sometimes not. If the tragic experience of Nazi-fascism refuted once and for all the evolutionary and positivistic scheme, other tragic historical experiences (for example, the Taiping revolt in China) have highlighted the inane or fatal character of the postponement to "messianic time" and messianism. The basic limitation of Benjamin's historical balance sheet is that it takes into account a geographical area and a time frame that is too narrow. I have already mentioned the first point. As far as the second is concerned, it should be noted that already after Stalingrad Heidegger lost his confidence; and in the years in which the anti-fascist resistance was developing worldwide, the emancipation movement seemed to have found the legs on which to march and did not feel the need to focus its hopes on the sudden irruption of the Messiah.

In any case, with the Theses on the Philosophy of History, we are immersed in the historical process and in the process of learning, itself historical, of the times and ways of transformation of the political-social reality. There

is no escaping this dual process. We can consider utopian socialism, still on this side of the industrial revolution and the political revolution, as the initial stage of the learning process; But, even if we wanted to, we are not able to return or regress to that stage. To attempt to do so, ignoring and removing all that the industrial and political revolutions and centuries of history have taught us, would be to deny the process as a whole. In the final analysis, this would be an irrationalistic slip-up that could in no way be put on the same level as the first attempts of utopian socialism to move and orient itself on a completely unknown terrain. An adult may well dream of returning to childhood, but this dream would be the sign not of his rejuvenation but of his accelerated senescence.

Not of verdant freshness but of its opposite, it would give proof of a socialism that continued to agitate the utopia of a future marked by the disappearance of all contradictions and conflicts, and that had learned nothing from the real attempts and real experiences of building a post-capitalist society. Taking seriously and developing the learning process also means saying goodbye to the thesis, which we can read in a famous poem by Brecht, according to which communism is the "simplicity that is difficult to make". It is a vision in which traces or residues of populism and messianism can be felt; Common sense and the wisdom and morality of the people are easily recognized in a reign of justice and peace, the realization of which is prevented or hindered only by the obstinacy of a small minority of exploiters and oppressors. In fact, historical experience shows that communism is difficult to think about and plan before it is even to be realized. We shall see that, after the October Revolution, different and contradictory capitalist social systems follow one another in a conflictual and dramatic way. Even today, countries that call themselves socialist such as Cuba, Vietnam and above all China constitute an element of division, rather than unity, for the

variegated and dispersed international movement of Marxist and communist inspiration.

Brecht's view is also unconvincing for another reason. If we assume that socialism and communism are a 'simple' idea, the distance that separates the societies that have and continue to refer to this idea and the model of socialism and communism pursued by each of us from time to time can be explained either by the mental poverty of the leaders of those societies or, by the fact that they are in a state of poverty. more easily and more often, with their "betrayal". It would seem that this unfortunate category, after having been obsessively used by the various parties to the conflict throughout the history of twentieth-century communism, has fallen into disuse. It's not like that. When, without any attempt at a historical explanation, the reforms launched in China not only by Deng Xiaoping but also by a large leadership group and by a party with a long history of communist militancy are made to coincide with the restoration of capitalism, the thesis of "betrayal" is in fact resorted to. When, in analyzing the turning point in 1979 that occurred in China, no reference is made either to the objective situation (the death of the great historical leader made the attempt to promote economic development through appeals to mass mobilization and enthusiasm less plausible than ever) or to the laborious process of learning how to build the post-capitalist society (the collectivization of the economy on a very large scale had produced a phenomenon of generalization of the economy). On the theoretical level, a void opens up that can only be filled by the category of "betrayal".

1. [Here, in the original file, there is a space between this paragraph and the next, a sign that Losurdo probably intended to say something more, perhaps even about the Event, before returning to Benjamin; Ed.].

2. [The title is identical to Losurdo (2017, pp. 155-9), but the text is different; Ed.].

3. [This, in fact, does not happen: in all likelihood, these are themes entrusted to the fourth chapter according to the first index of the volume. As already specified in the Introduction, this chapter is not present either in the original file or in the printed copy (prior to the last version of the file); N.d.C.].

#### 4. Communism as Escapism and as a "Real Movement"

##### Populism, messianism, rebellion

The summary liquidation of socialism with Chinese characteristics and market socialism is only the most striking demonstration of the weight that populist and messianic tendencies continue to exert in the sphere of "libertarian Western Marxism." Think of the attention paid to migrants. Let me be clear, not only is it necessary, but it must be further strengthened. And yet those exponents of "libertarian Western Marxism" who, after having supported or passed over in silence the destruction of Libya and Syria, are now moved by the fate reserved for the refugees from those countries, have made a very bad impression. We can easily imagine the rivers of tears that populists and a certain left would have shed if China, after having suffered a fate similar to that of so many "failed states" or forced to fail, had invaded the world with tens or hundreds of millions of migrants fleeing hunger and despair; But these are the same populists who, on June 4 of each year, commemorate in an uncritical and Manichean way the "Tiananmen Square incident," that is, the tragic conclusion of a conflict that the West and the United States, if not promoted, had helped to exacerbate and make intractable, in the hope that it could transform the country that emerged from the greatest anti-colonial revolution in history into a "failed state" or rather into a series of states more or less failed. One is reminded of those Christians mocked by Hegel who, in order to be able to fulfill the

obligation of giving charity to the poor, need the indefinite permanence of the condition of poverty. In reality, taking the relief of the poor seriously means committing oneself to the creation of social relations and political institutions that are capable of eradicating the scourge of poverty once and for all. In a similar way, truly taking the cause of migrants to heart certainly means combating the shameful discrimination to which they are often subjected in the countries where they arrive, but also and above all promoting the development of the country from which they flee or from which they would flee if its economic and social conditions did not experience a significant improvement. On the other hand, it would seem that populists are moved by the fate of the poor and migrants only after they, as a result of the destruction or drastic impoverishment of their country, have been condemned to despair!

Populism identifies the place of moral excellence in the world of the humble and oppressed, of those who are far from power. But, if they become protagonists of a victorious revolution, the humble and oppressed cease to be such, and the populists fall into crisis. Read these statements by Hardt and Negri (2000, pp. 133 and 112): "From India to Algeria, from Cuba to Vietnam, the state is the poisoned gift of national liberation." Yes, the Palestinians can count on our sympathy; But, from the moment they are "institutionalized," you can no longer be "on their side." The fact is that "the moment the nation begins to form itself and becomes a sovereign state, its progressive functions cease to exist." In other words, one can only sympathize with the Vietnamese, Palestinians, or other peoples as long as they are oppressed and humiliated; A struggle for national liberation can only be supported to the extent that it continues to be defeated! Declarations of love for socialism and communism go in the same direction, on condition, however, that they are not "state-based," that is, on condition that they are the expression of subaltern



classes that <lo> have not conquered and are unable to conquer it, and that they resign themselves to remaining subordinate. The defeat or inconclusiveness of a revolutionary movement is the premise for populists to celebrate themselves and enjoy themselves as champions of the cause of the humble! It is the same attitude criticized by Hegel among Christians, it is the attitude which, in order to be perpetuated, in reality presupposes the defeat of the cause he claims to want to defend, whether it is the cause of the poor, migrants, the subaltern or the colonial peoples.

On the other hand, the existing power, even that which has sprung from a great revolution and which is the protagonist of an ambitious process of emancipation, appears decidedly reprehensible or, at best, hopelessly mediocre, in the eyes of those who live in contemplation or in the messianic expectation of the totally Other. by definition, it is incapable of recognizing itself in a concrete and determined political and social reality. Once again, this is a tendency that is peculiar to the subaltern classes, in this case above all to the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, which has no experience in the management of power and is often scarcely interested in acquiring it. The communist movement had somehow overcome this tendency, but after the crisis of 1989-91 it is once again strongly present in the authors who even today have the merit of reviving and reviving the revolutionary and communist idea.

Badiou (2010, p. 10) denounces "the bestial form assumed by American militarism and its servants." Albeit more pointedly, Žižek also recognizes the brutality of Washington's imperialist policy. With regard to Salvador Allende's Chile, he quotes Henry Kissinger as instructing the CIA: "Let the economy scream in pain," and he points out that this policy continues to be implemented against "Bolivarian" Venezuela (Žižek, 2011b, p. 130; 2012, p. 85). Is the denunciation of "militarism" and imperialism

followed, in the two philosophers, by a real recognition of the reasons of the countries that try to resist everything? We will see the sovereign contempt with which Žižek speaks of China. But this is not the only target: "Venezuela's 'Bolivarian' experiment is progressively regressing to a Caudillesque populism" (Žižek, 2013, p. 163). Yet we have just seen the Slovenian philosopher recognize that the developments in Venezuela are not the result of purely internal evolution. Taking into account the international context does not mean renouncing criticism, but making it concrete, rather than reducing it to a scholastic exercise. However, the rebel is primarily concerned with asserting his superiority over any given political content. In doing so, he professes anti-dogmatism; In reality, the dreaded and heavy dogmatism of the object is replaced by an evident and coquettish dogmatism of the subject.

The same result can be reached if we move from international politics to domestic politics. In the name of the struggle against *étatisme* and against the compulsion exercised in any way by the state, Žižek (*ibid.*, pp. 145-7) does not hesitate to condemn progressive taxation, without which it is not possible to realize economic and social rights. Also

When the "revolutionary left" polemicizes against neoliberalism, it hides in horror from the accusation or suspicion of compromise with state power and thus reveals itself incapable of waging a coherent struggle, on the ideological as well as on the immediately political level, against the dismantling of the welfare state.

In the U.S., avowed enemies of the welfare state like to call themselves libertarians. Yes, they are 'libertarians' when it comes to challenging the political and state power committed to introducing progressive taxation or even just combating tax evasion. But they have no objection to the gigantic financial (and political) power that, for example -

think of a multinational like Walmart - prohibits trade union organization in the workplace and imposes servile or semi-servile working conditions. And they have no objection to the sovereign power of life and death, exercised through extrajudicial executions carried out from the air of drones or through the unilateral unleashing of devastating wars.

Peter Sloterdijk, the philosopher who today stands out for his struggle against the intolerable state compulsion inherent in progressive taxation and against the welfare state as such, can be considered a "libertarian" in the European version. It is a pity that he can avail himself of Žižek's sympathy or understanding. Although regrettable, this is not surprising. The formalistic cult of the "rebel" is not alien to the Slovenian philosopher either. This is demonstrated by his polemic against statism and the state as such; A symptom of this is also the title of one of his (deservedly) most famous books: *In Defense of Lost Causes*. The figure of the defender of lost causes is a further version of the figure of the "rebel" or the "dissident". After the defeat suffered during the Civil War, the ideologues of the slave-owning South liked to pose as intrepid followers of the Lost Cause, of a Cause bent by power, or rather by the overwhelming industrial and military power of the Union, but no less noble. In reality, although militarily defeated, the champions of the racial state managed to save the essence of their political program: they imposed in the South a regime of white supremacy terrorism that raged not only on blacks but also on "yellows"; the slavery of African Americans was replaced by the semi-slavery of coolies from China and India; On the whole, "democracy for the people of the lords" celebrated its triumphs. It was the way of behaving dear to Nietzsche as well: the theoretician of aristocratic radicalism and the singer of old and "new" slavery resorted to the gesture of (aristocratic) distinction of proudly claiming his own "outdatedness" <(cf. Losurdo, 2014b, pp. 373-7; 2014c, pp. 66i-8)>, in opposition to the

power now exercised by the plebeian and vulgar masses; but this did not prevent him from agitating motives often in full consonance with the reaction and the anti-democratic power that was taking place. they were affirming; and in full consonance with the dominant ideology at the end of the nineteenth century were the theorization of social Darwinism and the celebration of eugenics well present in Nietzsche's work.

Similarly, Zizek wrote a book *In Defense of Lost Causes*, but this gesture of coquettish nonconformism corresponds to a political and ideological content that goes in exactly the opposite direction. It is not just a question of the stance that leads the Slovenian philosopher to take a stand in defense of Sloterdijk and against progressive taxation, that is, in defense of a cause, in times of triumphant neoliberalism, that is anything but "lost". Nor is it just a question of the representation of China as a country with "authoritarian capitalism" and fiercely anti-worker: a cliché that is in perfect consonance with the dominant ideology (and with today's ideology of war agitated in particular by the leading country of the West) and that once again has nothing to do with "lost causes" <(cf. Losurdo, 2017, pp. 146-9)>. What is more, we have seen that, in its fluctuations, the same judgment on "Bolivarian" Venezuela sometimes flattens out to that of the enemies of that country, who in the West are very numerous and indeed in clear prevalence.

Marx and Engels do not have the coquettish gesture of those who, regardless of their concrete contents, claim to defend "lost" or "outdated" causes, but who often end up taking up the motives, certainties and even dogmas of the dominant ideology. Behind the authors of the Communist Manifesto there is a very different tradition. From a work that analyzed and defended the revolution that had overthrown the old regime in Spain in 1820, Hegel transcribed in Berlin a note with which he felt in perfect

harmony: "Today courage no longer consists in attacking governments, but in defending them." The government that came to power in Madrid may have been mediocre and certainly did not fulfill all its promises, but it was still to be preferred to the reactionary revolt and rebellion of the Sanfedist gangs, supported or encouraged by the powers of the ancien régime (Losurdo, 1997a, pp. 344-51).

About two decades later, the young Marx was no different. Not yet a communist but already a revolutionary, he edited the *Rheinische Zeitung*, which described itself as a "liberal newspaper." It was, however, a liberalism which was in no way to be confused with "vulgar liberalism" (*gewöhnlicher Liberalismus*). If the latter saw "all good on the side of the representative bodies and all evil on the side of the government", the "*Rheinische Zeitung*", on the other hand, was characterized by its effort to analyze the relations of domination and oppression in their concrete configuration, without hesitating, in certain circumstances, to emphasize "the general wisdom of the government against the private selfishness of representative bodies" (often monopolized by the feudal classes and by a large bourgeoisie linked to them by a relationship of alliance and even subordination); In contrast to "vulgar liberalism," far from fighting "one-sidedly against bureaucracy," Marx had no difficulty in acknowledging the merits of its struggle against the "romantic" or romantic-feudal tendency (*mew*, *Erg. Bd. I*; 424). On the other hand, it was Bismarck who was the first to take aim at the bureaucracy, or rather the "bureaucratic omnipotence", which in his eyes was responsible for imposing "levelling" (i.e., striking at feudal privilege), for nurturing "Jacobin" tendencies, and even for cherishing the dream of a kind of "red democracy"! (Losurdo, 1997a, pp. 598-603). If we compare the great revolutionary and the future Iron Chancellor, it was rather the latter who assumed anti-bureaucratic and rebellious posturing.

Let us now move from Germany to the England of the years in which the workers' struggle for the reduction and legal and state regulation of working hours was developing. Along with the recognition of the positive role that the state, even if it was a state controlled by the exploiting classes, could play under the pressure of the workers' struggle, there was also a recognition in mature Marx of the positive role that the bureaucracy could play in containing the excessive power of the capitalist masters, no longer of the feudal barons. Capital painted an admiring portrait of a state official who was particularly scrupulous in demanding compliance with the Factory Acts:

Inspector of factories, de facto censor of factories; He has earned immortal credit for himself among the English working class. All his life he struggled not only with the exasperated manufacturers, but also with the ministers, for whom it was immeasurably more important to count the votes of the bosses in the lower house than the working hours of the "arms" in the factory (mew, 23; 238 note 32).

Not unlike Bismarck, on the other hand, were the English capitalists who, as Capital again emphasized, "denounced the factory inspectors as a kind of Jacobin commissars of the Convention" (ibid., 23; 301). And, again, in the confrontation between the great revolutionary and the English capitalists, it was the latter who resorted to anti-statist and anti-bureaucratic rhetoric and assumed rebellious posturing, even if only to defend the bosses' despotism in the factories and wage slavery in its crudest forms. And, indeed, Marx calls them "the pro-slavery rebels" (Proslavery-Rebellen), the protagonists of "a pro-slavery-rebellion" (Proslavery-Rebellion), similar to that which had seen the slave owners of the South rise up in the United States against a government that they feared might question the freedom of ownership in human livestock (ibid., 23; 305 and 302).

Even in a class society, it is not certain that power is on the wrong side and opposition on the right side. In the

words of Engels, there are also "revolutions from above" (ibid., 7; 517), that is, progressive reforms carried out from above, both of which are often carried out in response to popular pressure and even to prevent a possible revolution from below. It is this complexity of the historical process and social conflict that eludes the populist.

In the light of all this, one can understand Gramsci's later analysis of "reactionary subversiveness." In an article dated June 22, 1921, the leader of the Italian Communist Party replied to Mussolini, who had joined Fascism and continued to boast of having been a follower of Blanqui and a rebel and a "heretic" expelled from the "orthodox church" of socialism, distinguishing Blanqui's position from Mussolini's "subversiveness," which was now clearly and unequivocally reactionary. but adding: as a "social theory of the coup de main", of blind rebellion, "Blanquism, in its materiality, can be subversive today, reactionary tomorrow, but never revolutionary" (Gramsci, 1966, pp. 205-6). Later, the Prison Notebooks underlined: despite their ultra-revolutionary appearances, "the phrases of 'rebelliousness', 'subversiveness', primitive and elementary 'anti-statism'" are in reality an expression of 'apoliticism', and therefore of evasion from the reality of social conflict and of substantial renunciation of modifying what exists. Contrary to what the rebel likes to think, "a lack of understanding of the state means a lack of class consciousness." At best, rebellion and anti-statism on principle can stimulate a popular "subversiveness" powerless to produce a new political-social order; sometimes, they can even pave the way for the "subversiveness from above" of the ruling classes (Gramsci, 1975, pp. 2108-9 and 326-7), a "subversiveness from above" like that of Mussolini, for example, whom we have seen posing as a fearless "heretic" himself, ready to defy any "Orthodox Church."

## How Rebelliousness Turns Into Its Opposite

The category of "rebel" is entirely formal, which can take on different and opposing political contents. The considerations I made on another occasion about the figure of the "dissident" <(Losurdo, 2014a, pp. 202-4) are valid>. When necessary, the dominant ideology presents him as the intrepid militant who avoids any contamination with power and who indeed does not hesitate to challenge it; On the other hand, the fact that the "dissident" can target and be incited to target a state power that is itself a "dissident" with respect to a much more powerful and disturbing planetary power is not mentioned. Let's take a member of the pro-Western opposition in Cuba: he is certainly a "dissident" with respect to the power in force in his country, but he is also a "dissident" with respect to the power exercised by the United States on a global level and, in a particularly stringent way, in Latin America. If one criticizes the prison sentence imposed on the first 'dissident', one must criticise all the more the attempt to silence the second 'dissident' by means of the armed invasion of the island and the assassination of its leader. In Libya in 2011, were those who rose up against Gaddafi and achieved victory only thanks to the support provided by the most mammoth military apparatus in history to be properly considered "rebels" or "dissidents", or were they Gaddafi and his allies, protagonists of an anti-colonial revolution and long condemned to death by the West and NATO, whom they had dared to challenge? Of course, the whole thing was staged as a crusade in defense of human rights, but today we know that that crusade resulted in many, many more victims than the "genocide" it cynically claimed to prevent. Not to mention the fact that the war ended with the bloody lynching of Gaddafi and Mrs. Clinton's disjointed cry of triumph: "We came, we saw, he died!" (we came, we



saw, he died!) (ibid., pp. 28-30). And yet, this clearly and ruthlessly colonial barbarism has been able to avail itself, if not of complicity, at least of the silence of the alleged Western "rebels", determined not to take sides against other alleged "rebels" and willing to endorse or tolerate an infamous neo-colonial war, in order not to appear complicit with a state power (moreover dictatorial).

Nowadays, there is no more "rebellious" or "dissident" intellectual in the West than Žižek. At least at first glance. In reality, rebellion and dissidence end up evaporating rapidly, if we compare the dominant ideology and the vision of the Slovenian philosopher. The historical balance sheet he has drawn of the past century leaves no room for doubt: under the eyes of all are "the great failure of the communist project that was the distinctive feature of the twentieth century", indeed "the catastrophic results of the communist movement of the twentieth century" (Žižek, 2012, pp. 53 and 83). Is it really all that clear? There is certainly no shortage of authors who, although far removed from the communist movement, recognize the contribution it made to the construction of the welfare state in the West. Is this a minor detail? Certainly not the liquidation of the world colonialist system: it would be unthinkable in isolation from the communist movement and the "Soviet ideological and even military support" provided to the colonial peoples in revolt and which "made repression too costly" (Brzezinski, 2012, pp. 14 and 34). It is a chapter of history ignored and removed by the dominant ideology, but which ends up emerging from the analysis of a leading American strategist, once an authoritative member of the Carter administration. Well, compared to the catechism of the dominant ideology, is Žižek or Brzezinski more "rebellious" or "dissident"?

The first continues undaunted:

Were not fascism and Stalinism the twin monsters of the twentieth century, the former emerging from the desperate attempts of the old world to survive, the latter from an ill-conceived effort to build a new one? (Zizek, 2012, p. 125).

It is a mystery how one can equate on the one hand the obstinacy to preserve the "old world" of capitalism, colonial plunder and massacres and imperialist wars, and on the other hand the "ill-conceived effort" to leave this horror behind. These two completely heterogeneous quantities are not only put on the same level but are assimilated to the point of being configured as two "twin monsters", by definition indistinguishable or difficult to distinguish. Taking up and radicalizing the colonial tradition, Hitler explicitly proposed to enslave the Slavs but ended up being defeated by Stalin, who from the beginning warned of the dangers of colonial subjugation that loomed over Soviet Russia. No matter how many serious crimes committed by the Soviet leader, can the two antagonists really be considered "twin monsters"? Colonialism and anti-colonialism, slavery and anti-slavery are interchangeable. By the same logic, we will also have to consider Toussaint Louverture and Charles Leclerc, the protagonist of the epic anti-colonialist and anti-slavery revolution of Santo Domingo-Haiti and the commander of the mighty French army, committed to re-establishing colonial subjugation and slavery on the island.

The theory of the "twin monsters" clearly reproduces the state doctrine of "anti-totalitarianism" which, while assimilating the antagonists of a decisive chapter in the history of the twentieth century, removes the fact that one of them, Hitler, constantly referred to the colonial tradition of the West and, taking Great Britain and the USA as a model, looked to Eastern Europe as the place to build the "Germanic Indies" or as the new Wild West to be cleansed of the "Indians" of the "<ossia>natives" and where to build a colonial empire of the continental type.

Does Zizek at least go against the tide in reading the China before Deng Xiaoping's reforms, to which he sometimes seems to want to pay homage and which in any case is repeatedly and positively contrasted by him with today's China? It is precisely in the book *In Defense of Lost Causes* that one can read about "Mao's ruthless decision to starve ten million people to death at the end of the 1950s" (Zizek, 2009b, p. 212). When I first came across this statement, I was a little perplexed: was the Italian translation inaccurate or too emphatic? None of this, even the original, was unequivocal: "Mao's ruthless decision to starve tens of millions to death in the late 1950s" (Zizek, 2009a, p. 169). Not even the black book of communism goes that far! Of course, it never tires of affirming and reiterating that the "Great Leap" was a disaster, of more colossal proportions than the famines, however catastrophic, that mark the history of the great Asian country, and yet it recognizes that "Mao's aim was not to kill his compatriots en masse" (Margolin, 1998, p. 456)

Meanwhile, the state doctrine of the West has moved forward in its incessant effort to turn every chapter of the history of that great emancipation movement which was the communist movement into a heap of blood and mud. And it is this state doctrine that is in fact taken up by the Slovenian philosopher. Much more cautious is Helmut Schmidt who, in controversy with the journalist who interviews him, underlines the unintentional nature of the tragedy into which the Great Leap results.

If there was anyone who made the "decision" to sentence millions of people to death by starvation, he is to be sought not in Beijing but in Washington, he is to be sought in the circle of those who impose on a country and a people already tormented by the scourge of hunger an embargo that explicitly aims to be as devastating as possible. The fact remains that it is the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany who is in some way

defending Mao, distancing himself from an infamous and senseless calumny, which has nevertheless become the dogma of the anti-communist state religion of the West, not the rebellious philosopher, who bows to this dogma without hesitation. On the contrary, a general remark can be made. Against the country that emerged from the greatest anti-colonial revolution in history, the United States is waging a campaign that, in addition to the political, diplomatic and military levels, is also conducted on the cultural level: it is a matter of discrediting the People's Republic of China throughout its evolution, ideally hanging Mao from the tree of the Great Leap and Deng from the tree of Tiananmen Square and of "authoritarianism". Is Zizek proceeding very differently?

Now we come to the present day. On June 12, 2009, presidential elections took place in Iran, already hit by the cyberwar unleashed by the United States and Israel, and where scientists involved in the nuclear project or more generally in the military industry were often victims of attacks that were not too mysterious. They did not produce the results hoped for by Washington and Brussels, which immediately denounced the "electoral fraud". Brazilian President Lula, among others, questioned or ridiculed this accusation. The "Washington Post" itself acknowledged that there was no evidence to support the thesis of fraud: on the contrary, everything suggested that the "clear victory" won by the incumbent President Ahmadinejad was genuine. In fact, the forecasts released on the eve of the elections by the "Reuter" agency gave him an even clearer advantage than the one actually achieved (Dimaggio, 2009, p. 293). On the other hand, there is no doubt about Zizek (2013, pp. 87-8), who takes it for granted that these were "rigged elections" and expresses his pity for "the saddest spectacle" offered by the "left" of a different orientation from his own. But why was it legitimate (or necessary) to question the honesty and sincerity of the Iranian leaders but not of the

Western leaders? Why were those who did not even hesitate to resort to terrorism in their crusade against the government in Tehran above suspicion?

Now let's jump forward five years to deal with the protests that, starting with the paramilitary-style occupation of Maidan Square in Kiev in February 2014, led to the regime change in Ukraine longed for and promoted by the United States and the European Union, also physically present, with leading political leaders, who on the one hand intimidate the legitimate government, threatening it with heavy political and economic sanctions, on the other hand they encourage and incite the rioters. And again we come across a paradox: if Zizek praises the "heroes" of Maidan Square, less conformist Western analysts have no difficulty in speaking of a coup d'état orchestrated in the first place in Washington. A prestigious Italian geopolitical journal states that it was "thanks to the skill of the CIA, the work of friendly NGOs and financial aggression" (even "George Soros, a well-known Wall Street banker, admits to having greatly influenced Maidan") that the US managed "to cause the overthrow of the elected government and to obtain the installation in Kiev of a more or less pro-American oligarch." And it's not just about this: "On April 16, the director of the CIA, John Brennan, reached the Ukrainian capital to meet with the heads of the Armed Forces and visit the premises assigned to the American 007s in the headquarters of Ukrainian intelligence [...] In early May, Hunter Biden, son of Vice President Joe, joined the board of directors of Ukraine's largest private hydrocarbon company, Burisma Holdings, bringing with him Devon Archer, a former adviser to Secretary of State John Kerry" (Fabbri, 2014, pp. 193-4). Geopolitical expansion and personal and family enrichment have gone hand in hand.

It is now appropriate to mention two particularly significant voices. The first is from the former Italian

ambassador in Moscow: not only did a coup d'état take place in Kiev, but a coup d'état that does not limit itself to engulfing Ukraine but aims at the heart of Russia (Romano, 2014, p. 115). The second voice is that of a retired general, who has held very important positions (among other things, he was chief of staff of the NATO Command for Southern Europe). After reiterating the thesis of the coup d'état in Kiev, supported by well-documented analyses, starting with the events in Maidan Square, and with transparent reference to the series of coups d'état disguised as "color revolutions," the former general comes to a general conclusion:

[The] U.S. State Department [...] no longer directs felucca and party diplomacy and that in accordance with the Vienna Convention it should refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. In fact, he doesn't even direct diplomats. The ambassadors pose as spies and have adopted the techniques of the CIA of the time of Pinochet [and his coup] and the narcos by intervening directly in the politics and affairs of the countries of accreditation. They deploy all available instruments of pressure and subversion: old and new, soft and hard, public and private, manipulating and manipulating people and opinions with social media, with the corruption of officials, the intervention of mercenaries, non-governmental organizations, third states (Mini, 2014, p. 61).

The analyses and interventions mentioned above refer several times to the role played by NGOs in the destabilization and regime change operations promoted by Washington. Even a successful British historian, who explicitly celebrates the U.S. Empire, recognizes that it can often count on the support provided by non-governmental organizations (Ferguson, 2005, pp. 11-3 and 15). For Žižek (2012, p. 63), to express distrust of the role they play, for example, in denouncing "suffering in Tibet" is to turn one's back on "universal humanism"! Also in this case, the coquettish rebelliousness has no difficulty in turning into the grayest and most uncritical conformism.

## How Messianism Turns into Capitulationism

In addition to rebelliousness, messianism can also easily be reversed into its opposite. Exemplare is a story that takes place in Italy. Thanks also to Gramsci's lesson, the communist party soon said goodbye or put a damper on the messianic expectation of the advent of a world so devoid of contradictions and conflicts as to make the state institution and the juridical norm itself superfluous. In Paimiro Togliatti's theoretical and political elaboration, "progressive democracy" and the "Italian road to socialism" were instead called upon to combine together, in the hoped-for post-capitalist society, power and hegemony of the workers and people on the one hand and the rule of law on the other. This also meant putting an end to the "Marxist" vulgate, which dismissed as irrelevant the "formal" freedoms sanctioned by the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Taking up the great theme of the inheritance of the previous revolutionary tradition that the communist movement is called to assume and make its own, after having freed it from all racial and class exclusivism, the PCI led by Togliatti read the Resistance, the anti-fascist revolution, as the development at a qualitatively higher level of the Risorgimento, that is, of the revolution that had meant in Italy the end of the ancient regime and the advent of a more or less liberal system democratic.

Leaving behind the messianism that is the initial characteristic of a great revolution in which the subaltern classes or oppressed peoples are the protagonists, the post-capitalist future began to emerge in a new and more sober way, in the course of a learning process that was still groping and was far from over. But it was not long before it met with strong opposition.

In 1965, a leading intellectual of the "revolutionary" left, Alberto Asor Rosa, impeached the policy followed by the

PCI during the Resistance, "that strategy, which would later lead to conceiving the Italian road to socialism as necessarily linked to the implementation of the Constitution and bourgeois reforms." The "Togliattian and Gramscian communists" as a whole were mocked for their "democratism": they were "the last lagging exponents" of the "democratic, Garibaldian, Mazzinian, Carduccian Risorgimento" (Asor Rosa, 1969, pp. 156-7 and note). About ten years later, it was Rossana Rossanda who thundered against Togliatti, whom she reproached for the "formal character of the discourse of progressive democracy" and the persistent attachment to "constitutional political guaranteeism", the narrow-mindedness that enclosed him in the "classical horizon of the rule of law" (Rossanda, 1976, pp. 271-2).

In his indictment, Asor Rosa went even further. In 1946, a prestigious intellectual and leader of the PCI, Lucio Lombardo Radice, had written: "The world is evolving, but the truths of the world that is setting are gathered by the new world." The workers' movement had to be able to inherit something from the political-constitutional world, which it also radically questioned; In this way, the theme (well present in Engels, Lenin and in a very particular way in Gramsci) of the inheritance of the revolutionary tradition behind it that the proletariat is called to assume at the moment when it is preparing to build the post-capitalist society was taken up. But this was certainly not the point of view of Asor Rosa, who, disgusted, drew attention to the "even verbatim echo of Stalinist statements." In his eyes, it was the PCI as a whole which, in "conceiving the Italian road to socialism as necessarily linked to the implementation of the Constitution and bourgeois reforms," gave proof of both "democratism" and "Stalinism." It would seem that here "democratism" and "Stalinism" are one and the same. The allusion was to an important passage from Stalin's speech at the 19th Congress of the CPSU:



The bourgeoisie has thrown the flag of bourgeois-democratic liberties overboard; I think it is up to you, the representatives of the Communist and Democratic Parties, to raise it up and carry it forward, if you want to rally the majority of the people around you. There is no one else who can raise it high (Stalin, 1953, p. 153).

It was the time when anti-communist persecution was raging in the West and McCarthyism was celebrating its triumphs in the United States, with witch hunts unleashed against liberal and progressive circles as well. Today's re-reading of this passage, probably inspired by Togliatti, from Stalin's speech can only elicit a sigh: ah, if both had consistently adhered to the orientation that was so harshly reproached to them by Asor Rosa!

Similar considerations could be made with regard to Rossanda's irony about the rule of law. It fell more or less at the time when a radical change was beginning to take shape in China: while bitterly polemicizing against "real socialism," the Cultural Revolution had taken up a basic motif, the mockery of "formal" freedoms and the rule of law. Breaking with this view, Deng Xiaoping emphasized in 1979 that the extension and improvement of the "legal system" was the precondition for the real development of "democracy" (Deng Xiaoping, 1992-95, vol. II, p. 196). It was necessary to introduce the "rule of law" into the party and "society as a whole"; Of course, China lacked a solid legal tradition, but the Communists had to "help the people to understand the rule of law" (ibid., vol. III, pp. 166-7).

These were important first steps in the right direction; however, this problem as a whole cannot fail to appear trivial and petty starting from a messianic vision that reads the post-capitalist future as the advent of a totally Other, which by definition has nothing to learn and inherit from the history behind it.

Decades have passed since the stern warning against the vision that gave so much weight to "democratism" and the "rule of law", and in the meantime everything has

changed in the world! But it was quite impressive to read the resounding position taken by Asor Rosa delivered to "La Repubblica" on October 16, 2007. The "democratic-capitalist West" should have issued an ultimatum to the government in Beijing: the following year's Olympics would be boycotted if it did not undertake to publish in "all Chinese press and television organs," on the day of the opening of the Games, "a document in favor of universal rights of speech and association"! This text was impressive for at least two reasons: the "universal rights" did not include economic and social rights (for which the People's Republic of China distinguished itself positively, having freed hundreds of millions of people from hunger); only those previously despised as bourgeois were included. And that wasn't all. Asor Rosa admits that in the world's most populous country it was only "a minority" who thought like him; and, yet, the great powers that had been protagonists of the Opium Wars and the tragedy of "crucified China" were called upon to enforce the Charter of Rights, curtailed in a neoliberal key.

But did this capitulation to the liberal West at least entail the assimilation of the legacy of liberal thought? Certainly not its high points. We have already seen the liquidation of social and economic rights, dear to liberal socialism. We are also familiar with the great lesson of method provided by Hamilton, according to which the affirmation of the rule of law presupposes a situation of geopolitical tranquility <(Hamilton, 2001, p. 192; *The Federalist*, 8)>: and instead Asor Rosa entrusted the cause of the triumph of the rule of law in China to the same powers that had attacked it since the Opium Wars and that continued to threaten it with a frightening deployment deployed immediately close to its borders (bases of the Federalist). military, aircraft and warships, conventional and nuclear missiles). In Adam Smith (1977, p. 618 = book IV, chap. vii) we can read a denunciation of the harmful

effects of "global inequality", the one that manifests itself on a planetary level: at the time of the discovery-conquest of America, "the superiority of forces was so great to the advantage of the Europeans, that they were able to commit all sorts of injustices with impunity in those distant countries". Asor Rosa, on the other hand, reserved only words of contempt for the race for "development" with which the People's Republic of China was trying (and is trying) to shorten the gap with respect to the more advanced capitalist countries. Finally, we have seen that when the slavery of a people is at stake (or, we may add, its colonial subjugation or even its nuclear annihilation), if it serves to avert such dangers, "despotic government" may be the best option; Obviously, there was no room for the theme of the conflict of freedoms in Asor Rosa's Manichean vision: from the liberal tradition he inherited only the waving of the flag of freedom as an ideology of war and the rejection of democracy in international relations.

It would not have been worthwhile to dwell on this minor chapter in the history of ideas, if it did not emerge with particular clarity the dialectic according to which the messianism that emerges on the occasion of great historical crises, exhausting itself in periods of normality, tends to turn into capitulation to the dominant ideology. In any case, neither messianism nor capitulation succeeds in solving the problem of the inheritance of the high points of the liberal tradition; And this lack of learning also has very negative consequences for the struggles to be developed in capitalist society.

Unpredictability of the historical process and...

Populism and rebellion are not primarily the expression of the individual limitations of this or that author. They refer, as we know, to the objective living conditions of the subaltern classes and oppressed peoples. But there is another circumstance that should now be investigated. For a movement such as the communist one, which has affected the entire planet, which has cultivated a project of unprecedented ambition (the political and social emancipation of humanity as a whole) and which precisely for this reason is forced to think and deploy its commitment over a long period of time, what is a general characteristic of the historical process applies in a very particular way: the constant gap between the revolutionary project of social transformation and the actual historical development; However mature and articulate it may be, the project formulated by a revolutionary party and leader regularly reveals itself to be "simplistic" in the light of subsequent events. It is a problem that already arose in the course of Marx's life and evolution.

I will limit myself here to an example that I consider illuminating. At the end of the 1850s, while the peasant unrest in Russia was intensifying, which would soon lead Tsar Alexander II to abolish serfdom, in the United States the warning signs of the approaching civil war were becoming increasingly clear. On the night of October 16-17, 1859, John Brown, a fervent abolitionist from the North, burst into Virginia for a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to stir up the slaves of the South. On January 11 of the following year, Marx wrote to Engels:

In my opinion, the biggest thing that is happening around the world is, on the one hand, the American slave movement, sparked by Brown's death, and on the other, the slave movement in Russia. I read in the "Tribune" that a new slave revolt has broken out in Missouri, obviously suppressed. But the signal has been sent. If it gets more and more serious, what will happen in Manchester? (Mew, 30; 6-7).

Thus the scenario of a revolution on an almost planetary scale was evoked: more or less at the same time, the black slaves in the USA, the serfs in Russia and the wage slaves or workers in England would rebel respectively against the slave owners, the feudal aristocracy and the capitalist class. Perhaps from the very beginning Marx must have had doubts about the validity of this binary scheme. In fact, as early as the beginning of 1859 he published an article that evoked a very different scenario for Russia: the intertwining of the Crimean War with the revolt of the serfs, who would take advantage of the advance of the Franco-British troops to rise up against feudal oppression (ibid., 12; 681-2). In this case, the revolution was expected from the intertwining of international war and social conflict within Russia: we are then led to think of October 1917. We can draw a first conclusion: those who are affected by populism or rebellion are those who, unlike Marx, are unable to renounce the binary scheme of the generalized clash between poor and rich and who, dismayed by the complexity of the historical process, at every historical turning point cry out for the betrayal of the original purity of the revolutionary ideal.

The historical process is complex, tortuous, unpredictable for everyone; But for those who, rather than passively accepting it as it is, propose to orient or influence it, the gap between initial projects and hopes on the one hand and subsequent developments on the other proves to be of a particular and sometimes painful magnitude. What were the main historical turning points that took the communist movement by surprise?

a) Marx and Engels' approach to the problem of revolutionary dialectics is anything but doctrinaire. At the end of the nineteenth century, as the dangers of war became more acute, Engels evoked a scenario of this kind: Tsarist Russia would attack Germany, the country in the vanguard of the revolutionary movement: "in the face of

cowardice" and the uncertainties of the ruling classes, it would be revolutionary social democracy, which would play a role similar to that played by the Jacobins in France in 1793-94, to call for the "national existence" of the country; only that the final result would be not the salvation of the bourgeois republic but the advent of the German Socialist Republic (ibid., 38; 176). The prospect of anti-colonial revolution is certainly not absent from Marx's thought, who as early as 1833 formulated the hypothesis that the Indians would become "strong enough to shake off the yoke of British domination" (ibid., 9; 224; MEGA, 1,12, p. 251). With reference to Ireland, and therefore to a colony located in Europe, Marx emphasized that the "social question" could present itself as a "national question" and that, therefore, the social revolution could take the form of a national revolution. At least as far as the last phase of their evolution is concerned, the two revolutionary philosophers and militants were not without the prospect of revolution in a country like Russia, even though it was situated on the periphery of the developed capitalist world. Not a few of the contradictions and conflicts that would characterize the twentieth century were therefore foreseen. However, for Marx and Engels the epicenter of the revolution continued to be Europe or the West: after the Paris Commune had been drowned in a river of blood, they saw Germany replacing France in the role of vanguard of the revolutionary movement; The Russian Revolution itself was conceived as a prelude to the European Revolution. And, therefore, the shift of the epicenter of the revolution from the West to the South-East and the configuration of the social revolution almost always as a national revolution, as happened in the course of the twentieth century, all this was beyond the horizon of Marx and Engels. This is explained not only by the unpredictability of the historical process in general. There is something more specific, consisting of the moves that can be used by the antagonists

of the emancipation project pursued by a revolutionary movement: as early as 1868, in France, Ernest Renan indicated that colonial expansionism was "the only way out" to escape socialism. About three decades later, in Britain, Cecil Rhodes reiterated: "If you don't want civil war, you have to become imperialist" <(Losurdo, 2014a, pp. 207-70)>. It was a lesson that set the standard in many countries; On the other hand, the blunting of the social conflict in the capitalist metropolis corresponded, on the one hand, to the widening and worsening of the contradiction between colonial peoples and colonialist and imperialist powers, and on the other, to the extreme exacerbation of the contradiction between the colonialist and imperialist powers, which resulted in the First World War. It was the intertwining of these two contradictions with the long-standing struggle between the subaltern classes and the ruling elites. This unexpected and unpredictable turn of events disoriented sectors and personalities of the socialist and Marxist-inspired movement, who turned up their noses at the attempts to build a post-capitalist society in a country that was still largely pre-bourgeois, economically and politically backward, further impoverished and barbarized by war. It is "the last of the bourgeois revolutions," and certainly not the happiest, said Kautsky, who considered the events in Russia to be substantially alien to the cause of the struggle for socialism to which he believed he was still more faithful than ever. However, for the profane masses, the struggle in defence or against socialism in those years took the form of a struggle in defence of or against Soviet Russia.

b) It was Lenin who called attention to Rhodes' statement. And yet, despite the awareness already at the beginning of the twentieth century of the "enormous importance of the national question" and colonial (lo, 21; 90), with the elaboration of a vision that clearly went beyond that of Marx and Engels, the great Russian

revolutionary could not have imagined that the clash between colonialism and anti-colonialism would have invested Europe itself and that it would indeed find its epicenter here. It seemed that the Bolshevik October of 1917 was to be the prelude to socialist revolutions in the West; the partition of the colonies was complete and any attempt at a new partition of the world would mean a mortal clash between the colonialist and imperialist powers and would reactivate the dialectic of the transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war that had led to the emergence of Soviet Russia. However, Hitler made a new and unexpected move: yes, the partition of the traditional colonial world was complete, but there was nothing to prevent the transformation into colonies of countries that had already been co-opted into the civilized world and even had an imperialist past behind them. The Third Reich unleashed a barbaric war aimed at subjugating and enslaving the Slavs of Poland and the Soviet Union; in the same way the Empire of the Rising Sun proceeded against China and something similar was attempted by Fascist Italy in the Balkans: in particular, those against the Soviet Union and China were the two largest colonial wars in history. As a result, the national question regained centrality and priority at the global level; The defeat of the Axis, despite the formation of a "socialist camp" in Eastern Europe in the wake of the advance of the Red Army, gave impetus not to a series of socialist revolutions but to a gigantic wave of anti-colonial revolutions, often directed or influenced by the Communists and therefore of socialist orientation. This new historical turning point was also characterized by contradictions and acute conflicts within the communist movement: the class struggle gave way to the national struggle; In the Soviet Union and China, Lenin's slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war was replaced by the call to carry out the Great Patriotic War against the Third Reich and the war



of resistance against Japanese imperialism. The disorientation, perplexity, distrust, and even disgust that manifested themselves in certain sectors of the communist movement is well understood: the fact remains, however, that in those years the dividing line between communism and anti-communism largely coincided with the line that divided those who supported the epic anti-colonialist struggles in which the Soviet and Chinese peoples were protagonists and those who opposed or hindered them.

c) The main interpreter of this new situation was Mao Zedong, who in 1938, with regard to China threatened with colonial subjugation and enslavement by Japan, spoke of "identity between the national struggle and the class struggle" <(Losurdo, 2013, pp. 169-72)>. And this identity tended to characterize the anticolonial revolution as a whole. And Mao was also right to point out that in fact the epicenter of the class struggle had shifted from West to East in those years and that it saw as its main protagonists not the workers of the capitalist metropolis, but the peoples of the colonies or semi-colonies struggling for their liberation. Even if it was to some extent inspired by an unfortunate struggle for hegemony within the communist movement, this thesis correctly reflected the new international framework. The Cold War, which was becoming hot and even fiery in Indochina and in Cuba was in danger of turning into a nuclear holocaust, was largely the West's attempt to stifle the world's anti-colonialist revolution. Instead, it was supported primarily by two countries, the Soviet Union and China, which were in fierce competition with each other, but both had just left behind an epic anti-colonialist struggle, waged against the Third Reich and the Empire of the Rising Sun respectively. And yet, even in this case, there was no lack of circles and personalities of the communist movement who, in the name of "workerism", for example, looked with disdain at profane history, considered irrelevant from the point of view of the

pure class struggle and the genuine struggle for communism.

d) Not even the anti-colonialist revolution had a unilinear course. Also in this case the initiative of the antagonists intervened to make it bumpy and unexpected. Together with Lin Piao, Mao thought that an uninterrupted series of revolutionary movements would develop from below and that their victory would mean the final encirclement of the capitalist and imperialist city by the anti-colonialist and third-world campaign. This was also the vision of Fidel Castro and even more so of Che Guevara, who hoped to replicate the victory of the Cuban revolution in other Latin American countries. However, victorious revolutions from below ended up being the exception rather than the rule. Taking advantage of the lesson of the Axis' total defeat to resume and radicalize the colonial tradition, the traditional colonial powers promoted a series of passive revolutions from above, which gave rise to countries that were formally politically independent but reduced to the rank of semi-colonies due to their persistent economic dependence or the presence on their territory or in the immediate vicinity of threatening military bases. Just in case, a formidable military apparatus, unified under the leadership of the North American republic, was ready to prevent the transition from passive to active revolution. In accordance with this logic, in 1946 the Philippines, which at the beginning of the twentieth century had seen a great anti-colonial revolution repressed by the United States with ruthless and sometimes genocidal practices, won a formal independence and was subject to watchful watch by Washington. The following year, and therefore even before the foundation of the People's Republic of China, India achieved independence thanks to a passive revolution, also implemented to prevent the model dear to Mao Zedong from becoming a school in the other great Asian country. Sometimes the danger of a transition from a passive to an

active revolution was averted by a preventive counter-revolution, which, in the case of Indonesia, involved the preventive massacre of hundreds of thousands of Communists. Even countries that had a victorious anti-colonial revolution behind them could be neutralized by a policy of economic containment even more than by military containment, by means of devastating embargoes, capable of shaking their real independence, undermining their social base of consensus at the internal level and their ability to attract them internationally: it was the policy that had been implemented for decades against China and is still in force against Cuba.

Deng Xiaoping became aware of the new turning point. Mao had repeated to the end (and Lin Piao with him): "As far as the problem of world war is concerned, there are only two possibilities; One is that war gives rise to revolution [as was the case during the two world wars], and the other is that revolution prevents war" (in Lin Piao, 1969, p. 84). Unlike in 1914 and 1939, the revolutionary movement could deploy such force that it was impossible to wage war. The new Chinese leader, on the other hand, started from a completely different assumption: the US and the West had managed to stop the wave of the anti-colonial revolution and stabilize the international situation; It was possible to envisage a prolonged period of peace or, more exactly, without large-scale wars. This stalemate, if on the one hand it was the result of a defeat, on the other hand it could have been the occasion for a powerful advance: instead of wasting resources in anticipation of an improbable conflagration, a country like China could use the time at its disposal to develop its productive forces powerfully and to achieve economic and technological independence. as well as political, thus constituting a point of reference for the entire Third World. Even countries that had achieved independence through a passive revolution or that, as in Latin America, enjoyed partial freedom and were

always on the verge of being totally erased by a military intervention by Washington, those countries could also follow the path of independent development and the struggle against the hegemonism consecrated by the Monroe Doctrine and other similar doctrines. In other words, the anti-colonial revolution continued, but in different forms: it had passed from the political-military phase to the political-economic one. The results of this new phase of the anti-colonial revolution were not lacking and are not lacking, and indeed they are very significant: the hopes of transforming China into a semi-colonial country have proved to be foolish; on the contrary, the great divergence that consecrated the absolute dominance of the West and its leading country on the international level is being drastically reduced; The attempt to reaffirm the Monroe Doctrine in Latin America has failed spectacularly; the hope that had been nurtured for some time in Washington that the triumph achieved in the Cold War could mean substantial control of Russia's immense energy assets and the reduction of this country to a semi-colonial condition has not been <è> realized; the wave of destabilization and regime changes disguised as "color revolutions" seems to have run out; the claim of the West and its leading country to sovereignly unleash wars in every corner of the world, even without the authorization of the UN Security Council, it is the subject of increasingly widespread contestation; The credibility of the United States as a "nation chosen by God" to lead the world is at an all-time low.

But it is precisely the successes achieved by the second stage of the world anti-colonialist revolution that could end up shortening the period of relative stability and relative peace, correctly foreseen and wisely used by Deng Xiaoping. It is increasingly clear that there are circles in the United States that cherish a wicked dream: the superpower, still solitary for some time, could try to

consolidate and make definitive its primacy and to shake off the crisis and decline, leveraging its for now unparalleled military apparatus. There is no doubt about it: the outbreaks of war are increasing, the dangers of large-scale war are increasing. Will the devastating conflict that is now beginning to loom on the horizon stop on this side of the nuclear threshold?

Certainly not reassuring is the fact, also highlighted by unsuspected analysts (for example by the former Italian ambassador in Moscow), that for a long time the United States has aspired to guarantee "itself the possibility of an unpunished first blow" (Romano, 2014, p. 29).

Arising out of the struggle against the First World War, the communist movement should be in the front line, united and compact, in the struggle in defense of peace; And, mindful of its history, it should also be in the front line, united and compact, in the struggle in defense of the new stage of the world anti-colonialist revolution. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Even today, perhaps today more than ever, there is no lack of circles and personalities who consider these tasks too mediocre and too vulgar, in any case completely profane with respect to the sacred history of emancipation and revolutionary salvation that they imagined and only dear to them.

### ... A Double Definition of 'Communism'

Communists are called upon to admit a truth, however painful it may be: even the ideal of communism can be configured as an instrument of evasion, indeed as a religion of evasion. Compared to the bright future, that is, the paradise of believers, the concrete struggles imposed from time to time by the objective developments of the class

struggle and the individual stages of the emancipation process seem to be an integral part of a valley of tears that is absolutely worthless.

Marx shows that he was fully aware of this danger even at the beginning of his training as a philosopher and revolutionary militant. It is necessary to start from the "real struggles". It is worth noting that italics are already in Marx, who further clarifies:

We will not face the world in a doctrinaire way, with a new principle: here is the truth, here kneel [...] We do not say to him: abandon your struggles, they are nonsense; We will shout to him the real slogan of the struggle. We will only show him why he actually fights, for conscience is something which he must make his own, even if he does not want it (MEW, 1; 345).

If one neglects the "real struggles" or, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, the "historical movement that is unfolding before our eyes", the militant and theoretician of the revolution ends up being transformed into an "apostle who saves the world" (ibid., 4; 474-5). While on the one hand it is necessary to warmly welcome today's Marx Renaissance and the current development of the "libertarian communist movement", on the other hand it is necessary to recognize the danger that within them the "apostle savior of the world" will gain the upper hand over the militant and theoretician of the revolution. Yes, desertion from concrete struggles against the dismantling of the welfare state, in defense of state sovereignty, national independence and the right to development, all this is sometimes justified by referring to the ideal of communism: compared to the bright future thus evoked, how limited and petty the struggles underway today appear! In this perspective, communism is an instrument of escape from reality, like any other religion.

Precisely in order to confront this danger, German Ideology, in which there is an emphatic vision of the communist future, at the same time provides us with a very

different definition of communism: it is to be understood not as "a state of affairs to be established, an ideal to which reality must conform", but as "the real movement that transcends the present state of affairs" (ibid., 3; 35). It would be disastrous if the sublime beauty of the communist future were to divert attention from the struggles that are being imposed in the present.

It is by no means a question of resuming the formula ("the movement is everything, the end is nothing") dear to Bernstein, who refused to question the essential, namely the political power of the bourgeoisie and the imperialist arrogance of the great powers (the benevolence with which the German Social-Democratic leader looked upon the "civilizing" mission of colonialism is well known). The goal that Bernstein would have wanted to erase (thus eternalizing the existing political-social relations at the national and international level) actually continues to exist: it is a matter of building a post-capitalist and post-imperialist society, a society, however, that cannot and must no longer be imagined with the colors of a utopia that, with its ethereal beauty, diverts attention from the "real struggles" and the "real movement" <(Losurdo, 2005b, pp. 96-8)>. As in the past, the concreteness and credibility of communist commitment in the present is measured by its ability to understand and assert in theory and practice the dual definition of "communism" that we find in Marx and Engels.

1 [Obviously, this first sentence of the chapter is immediately linked to what was expressed in the chapter that has since been deleted. In any case, for "libertarian Western Marxism" the reference is Žižek (2009b, p. 255); N.d.C.].

[Here Domenico Losurdo, in the body of the text, continues for a stretch in a different font from the one normally used. We keep it in the body of the text, marking its beginning and end; N.d.C.}.

[This is the end of the part in a font other than the one normally used in the body of the text; Editor's note].

4. [Here Domenico Losurdo, in the body of the text, continues for a stretch in a different font from the one normally used. This passage can be given the value of an annotation, which we report below; N.d.C.]. I would add, although it resorted to a voluntarism that was out of touch with reality, it aimed to free the great Asian country from the tragedy (endemic scarcity, recurrent famines and related death by starvation on a large scale) that had been inflicted on it in the first place by colonialist aggression and the "century of humiliation" and which continued to be fueled by the ruthless embargo decreed by the United States.

5 [Here Domenico Losurdo continues, in the body of the text, with a font different from the one normally used; since this passage is absolutely consequential with respect to the previous and the following passage, we integrate it - indicating its beginning and end - into the body of the text itself; N.DC.].

[This is the end of the part in a font other than the one normally used in the body of the text; Editor's note].

7 [The sentence implies a reference which, in the version of the text that has come down to us, is not present; we have, however, pointed out the passage by Hamilton to which Losurdo refers; Ed.].



## Conclusions

### Columbus' adventurous voyage as a metaphor for the revolution

Lenin and the leaders of the Communist International aspired to a world Soviet republic, with the ultimate disappearance of classes, states, nations, the market, religions. Not only have we never come close to that goal, but we have never been able to march in the direction of it. We would therefore be in the presence of a clear and total failure. In reality, the discrepancy between programs and results is typical of every revolution. The French Jacobins did not build or restore the ancient polis; the American revolutionaries did not produce the society of small farmers and producers, without polarization of wealth and poverty, without standing army and without strong central power; The English Puritans did not revive the Bible society they mythically transfigured. The story of Christopher Columbus, who set out in search of the Indies but discovered America, can serve as a metaphor for understanding the objective dialectic of revolutionary processes. Marx and Engels themselves underline this point: in their analysis of the French or English revolution, they do not start from the subjective consciousness of their protagonists or of the ideologues who invoked and ideologically prepared them, but from the investigation of the objective contradictions that stimulated them and the real characteristics of the political-social continent

discovered or brought to light by the upheavals that occurred; The two theorists of historical materialism thus underline the discrepancy between the subjective project and the objective result and finally explain the reasons for the production, and the necessary production, of this décalage. Why should we proceed differently with regard to the October Revolution?

1. [Here the text stops. The conclusion is, in all likelihood, only in the form of a hint. It is a repetition of a text that also recurs elsewhere; e.g. in Losurdo (2005b, pp. 113-7). Since it develops themes that are not strictly connected with the whole discourse of the Communist Question, it has been decided not to add anything here. Nor can it be ruled out that Losurdo voluntarily closed the discussion here, with this question. In any case, for adherence to the form in which the text has come down to us, an adherence that is the guiding criterion of its edition, its conclusion is presented in its original form; N.d.C.].

## Appendix

< Index 1 >

Premise

"Anti-totalitarianism" and anti-communism as state doctrines

Zip code. The

Communism as an "upside-down utopia"?

I. "Anti-Totalitarianism" and the Liberal West's Self-Absolution

2. Communism: An "Unspeakable Word"?

3. The blurred boundaries between utopia and concrete political project

4. Nature, artifice, social engineering

5. Utopia and Utopia Realized

6. Utopia and Upside-Down Utopia

7. The Myth and Reality of the "New Man"

8. Development of the productive forces: a new utopia turned upside down?

9. The "steady state" and "degrowth" as an upside-down utopia

Ch. 2

Liberal socialism or communism?

I. Marx, Lenin and the Cause of Freedom

2. "Imperialist reaction" and the birth of liberal socialism

3. Communism, Liberal Socialism, "Socialism for the People of the Lords"

4. Liberal Socialism and Communism: Three Opportunities to Meet (Missed)

5. Liberal Socialist Misunderstanding and Communist Responsibilities

6. The Basic Limits of Liberal Socialism

7. Bobbio contra Hobhouse: Liberal Socialism as an Escape from Conflict

8. From the escape from conflict to the delegitimization of anti-colonial revolutions

9. Bobbio's turning point and the decline of liberal socialism

10. 1848 and 1989: Tocqueville and Bobbio

11. Ecological revival of liberal socialism?

12. Communist Movement and the Legacy of Liberal Socialism

### Ch. 3

Maturation of the communist project and liberal legacy

I. Liberal Legacy and Criticism of Populism

2. Populism as a cult of "degrowth" and "nature"

3. Populism and messianism

4. Communism as a chapter in the history of religions?

5. The Messianism of the Totally Other

6. The Messianism of Waiting

7. Ah, if only Badiou had read Togliatti!

8. Return to "utopian socialism"? A quixotic enterprise

### Ch. 4

Thinking about China, rethinking postcapitalism

I. "Authoritarian Capitalism"/Democratic Capitalism

2. 'Political expropriation'/'economic expropriation'

3. Capitalism, "non-capitalist market economy", "reformed socialism"

4. 'State capitalism' and the 'initial stage of socialism'

5. Employers' union and workers' union

6. "More perfect equality," "crude egalitarianism," "radical egalitarianism"

7. Politics and Economics, China and the World

8. "Authoritarian capitalism" or a difficult transition with an uncertain outcome?

9. "Democratization" or "Plutocraticization" of China?

Ch. 5

Communism as escapism and as a "real movement"

1. Populism, Messianism, Rebelliousness

2. How Rebelliousness Turns Into Its Opposite

3. How Messianism Turns into Capitulationism

4. Unpredictability of the historical process and...

5. ... A Double Definition of 'Communism'

Ch. 6

In defense of the "party form"

References

< Contents 2 >

Premise

The Sunset of Illusions in 1989 and the "Unspeakable"  
Spectre

Part One

Possible Alternatives to Communism

Zip code. The

Liberal socialism

Ch. 2

'Radical democracy'

Ch. 3

Luddism and "degrowth"

Ch. 4

A return to utopian socialism?

Ch. 5

Fall back on populism?

Ch. 6

The Fascinating Rebelliousness

## References

ALY G. (2,005), *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main.

ARENDT H. (1986), *Rethinking Zionism* (1945), in Ead., *Ebraismo e modernità*, Unicopli, Milano.

ASOR ROSA A. (1969), *Writers and People. Populism in Contemporary Italian Literature* (1965), Samonà and Savelli, Rome (3rd ed.).

BADIOU A. (1988), *L'être et l'événement*, Seuil, Paris.

ID. (2006), *Il secolo* (2005), Feltrinelli, Milan.

ID. (2009), *L'hypothèse communiste*, Circonstances, 5, Lignes, Paris.

ID. (2010), *Second manifeste pour la philosophie*, Flammarion-Champs, Paris.

ID. (2011a), *La relation énigmatique entre philosophie et politique*, Germina, Paris.

ID. (2011b), *Le socialisme est-il le réel dont le communisme est l'idée?*, in A. Badiou, S. Zizek, *L'idée du communisme*, vol. 11, Lignes, Paris.

BEAUMONT G. DE (1989), *L'Irlande sociale, politique et religieuse* (1839), 2 vols., CERIUL, Université Charles De Gaulle-Lille II, Villeneuve-d'Ascq (repr. anast.).

B Ausg.). EBEL A. (1964), *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879), Dietz, Berlin (60

BENEDETTO E. (1995), *The Forgotten Anniversary*, in "La Stampa", 19 October.

BENJAMIN W. (1982A), *For the Critique of Violence* (1920-21), in Id., "Angelus

Novus". *Saggi e frammenti*, Einaudi, Torino. id. (1982b), *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), in Id., "Angelus Novus." *Saggi e frammenti*, Einaudi, Torino.

BERLIN I. (1989), Quattro saggi sulla libertà (1969), Feltrinelli, Milano.

BERNSTEIN E. (1896-97), Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die türkischen Wirren, in "Die neue Zeit", 4, pp. 108-16.

Id. (1900), Der Sozialismus und die Kolonialfrage, in "Sozialistische Monatshefte", 4, pp. 549-62.

BLOCH E. (1961), Naturrecht und menschliche Würde, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

ID. (1971), Geist der Utopie (1918), Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.

BOBBIO N. (1977a), Invito al colloquio (1951), in Id., Politica e cultura, Einaudi, Torino, pp. 15-31.

ID. (1977B), Difesa della libertà (1952.), in Id., Politica e cultura, Einaudi, Torino, pp 47-57

ID. (1977C), Della libertà dei moderni paragonata a quella dei posteri (1954), in Id., Politica e cultura, Einaudi, Torino, pp. 160-94.

ID. (1977d), Libertà e potere (1954), in Id., Politica e cultura, Einaudi, Torino, pp. 269-82.

ID. (1990A), L'utopia capovolta, La Stampa, Torino.

ID. (1990B), Dear Badaloni, only two questions..., in "l'Unità", 28 January.

ID. (1991), Stuart Mill liberal and socialist, in "La Lettera del Venerdì", suppl. to "l'Unità", 31 May.

ID. (1994), The Eternal Duel. Democracy without fascists or communists, in "La Stampa", 11 December.

ID. (1997), Autobiography, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

BOFFA G. (1997), The Last Illusion. The West and the Victory over Communism, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

BOUCLE C. (1938), Preface, in E. Halévy, L'ère des tyrannies. Etudes sur le socialisme et la guerre, Gallimard, Paris.

BRZEZINSKI Z. K. (2012), Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power, Basic Books, New York.

Bukharin N. I. (1984), *The Leviathan State. Writings on the State and the War, 1915-1917*, Unicopli, Milan.

BURKE E. (1826), *Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)*, in Id., *The Works: A New Edition*, vol. v, Rivington, London.

CAHEN J., FOUTEAU M. (1964), *An Unfinished Resistance. The Algerian War and the French Anti-Colonialists, 1954-1962*, 2 vols., Il Saggiatore, Milan.

CAILLÉ A. (2013), *For a Manifesto of Convivialism (2011)*, Pensa multimedia, Lecce-Brescia.

CALOGERO G. (1972), *Difesa del liberalsocialismo ed altri saggi*, Marzorati, Milano.

CAMPE j. H. (1977), *Briefe aus Paris zur Zeit der Revolution geschrieben (1790)*, Olms, Hildesheim (anast. Nachdr.)

CARR E. H. (1964), *The Bolshevik Revolution (1950)*, Einaudi, Turin (4th ed.).

CATHERWOOD c. (2004), *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq*, Carrol & Graf, New York.

CLARK CH. (2013), *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, Penguin Books, London.

COMITO V. (2014), *La Cina è vicinal*, Ediesse, Rome.

CRÈVECOEUR j. H. ST. JOHN DE (1904), *Letters from an American Farmer (1782)*, Duffield, New York.

ed.). CROCE B. (1950), *Italy from 1914 to 1918. Pages on the war*, Laterza, Bari (3

ID. (1959), *Discorsi di varia filosofia*, 2 vols., Laterza, Bari.

ID. (1967), *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915 (1928)*, Laterza, Bari.

ID. (1973), *Historical Materialism and Marxist Economics (1899)*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

ID. (1993), *Scritti e discorsi politiche (1943-1947)*, 2 vols., Bibliopolis, Naples.



DAHRENDORF R. (1963), *Classes and Class Conflicts in Industrial Society* (1959), Laterza, Bari.

DEL BOCA A. (2006), *Italians, good people?* (2005), Neri Pozza, Vicenza (3rd ed.).

DENG XIAOPING (1992-95), *Selected Works*, 3 vols., Foreign Languages Press, Beijing.

DIAMOND J. (1998), *Guns, Steel, and Disease. A Brief History of the World in the Last Thirteen Thousand Years* (1997), Einaudi, Turin.

DIMAGGIO A. (2009), *When Media Goes to War*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

FABBRI D. (2014), Obama's own goal, in "Limes. Rivista italiana di Geopolitica", 8, pp. 191-8.

FERGUSON N. (2005), *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (2004), Penguin Books, London.

ID. (2008), *Twentieth Century, the Age of Violence* (2006), Mondadori, Milan.

ID. (2011), *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Penguin Books, London. figes o. (2000), *The Tragedy of a People. The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (1996), tea, Milan.

FISHMAN T. c. (2005), *China SPA. The superpower that is challenging the world*, Nuovi mondi media, Bologna.

FONTAINE A. (1968), *History of the Cold War. From the Korean War to the Crisis of Alliances* (1967), 2 vols., Il Saggiatore, Milan.

FURET F. (1995), *The Past of an Illusion. The Communist Idea in the Twentieth Century*, Mondadori, Milan.

GENTILE G. (1991), *Il fascismo e la Sicilia (1924)*, in Id., *Politica e cultura*, vol. 1 (Opere, vol. xlv), Le Lettere, Firenze.

GERNET J. (1978), *The Chinese World. From the First Civilizations to the People's Republic* (1972), Einaudi, Turin.

GINGRICH N. (1995), *America, why are you so great?*, in "La Stampa", 26 January.

GOBETTI P. (1983), *The Liberal Revolution. Essay on the political struggle in Italy* (1924), Einaudi, Turin.

"GOLDEX POLDEX" (2011), *L'événement dans la chambre froide: le Carnivai de Solidarnosc (1980-1981), explosion de l'imaginaire politique*, in A. Badiou, S. Zizek, *L'idée du communisme*, vol. II, Lignes, Paris.

GRAMSCI A. (1966), *Socialism and Fascism. "L'Ordine Nuovo"*, 1921-1922, Einaudi, Turin.

ID. (1975), *Quaderni del carcere*, Einaudi, Torino.

ID. (1984), *Il nostro Marx, 1918-1919*, Einaudi, Torino.

ID. (1987), *"L'Ordine Nuovo"*, 1919-1920, Einaudi, Turin.

GUMPLOWICZ L. (1883), *Der Rassenkampf. Soziologische Untersuchungen*, Wagner'sche Universitätsbuchhandlung, Innsbruck.

HALÉVY É. (1938), *L'ère des tyrannies. Etudes sur le socialisme et la guerre*, Gallimard, Paris.

HAMILTON A. (2001), *Writings*, The Library of America, New York.

HARDT M. (1999), *La nuda vita sotto l'Impero*, in "il manifesto", 13 May.

HARDT M., BLACKS A. (2002), *Impero* (2000), Rizzoli, Milano.

IDD. (2004), *Multitude. War and Democracy in the New Imperial Order*, Rizzoli, Milan.

IDD. (2012), *This is not a manifesto*, Feltrinelli, Milan.

HEGEL G. W. F. (1919-20), *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, Meiner, Leipzig.

ID. (1969-79), *Werke in zivanzig Bänden*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main. Heidegger M. (1975), *Nietzsche: Der europäische Nihilismus* (1940), in Id., *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. xlviii, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main.

HEROLD J. CH. (1981), *Lover of a Century. Vita di Madame de Staël* (1958), Bompiani, Milan.

HOBHOUSE L. T. (1909), ed.). *Democracy and Reaction* (1905), Fisher Unwin, London (2

ed.). ID. (1921), *The Metaphysical Theory of the State: A Criticism* (1918), Allen & Unwin, London (2

ID. (1977), *Liberalism* (1911), Oxford University Press, Oxford.

HOBSON J. A. (1901), *Socialistic Imperialism*, in "International Journal of Ethics", 12, I, pp. 44-58.

ID. (1915), *Towards International Government*, Allen & Unwin, London.

ID. (1917), *The Fight for Democracy*, The National Labour Press, Manchester-London.

ID. (1974), *L'imperialismo* (1902; 3rd ed. 1938), isedi, Milan.

HOFBAUER H. (2011), *Verordnete Wahrheit, bestrafte Gesinnung. Rechtsprechung als politisches Instrument*, ProMedia, Wien.

HOFFMEISTER J. (HRSG.) (1936), *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, Frommann, Stuttgart.

HOLLOWAY J. (2004), *Changing the World Without Taking Power. The Meaning of the Revolution Today* (2002), Carta, Rome.

IGNATIEFF μ. (2002), *Lehrer Atta, BigD und die Amerikaner*, in "Die Zeit", 15. August, 34 (originally published in "The New York Times Magazine").

JEFFERSON TH. (1984), *Writings*, The Library of America, New York. jünger e. (1978), *Die totale Mobilmachung* (1930), in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. VII, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart.

KANT I. (1900), *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von der Deutschen Akademie of the Wissenschaften, Reimer-de Gruyter, Berlin-Leipzig.

KELLEY R. D. G. (1990) *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Repression*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill-London.

KERSHAW I. (1995), *What is Nazism? Interpretative Problems and Research Perspectives* (1985), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

KISSINGER H. (2011), *On China*, The Penguin Press, New York.

KOSS S. (1973), *The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London.

LACOUTURE J. (1967), *Ho Chi Minh*, il Saggiatore, Milan.

LAFARGUE P. (1888), *Die Legende von Victor Hugo*, in "Neue Zeit. Revue des geistigen und öffentlichen Lebens", 6.

LASKY H. J. (1948), *Liberty in the Modern State*, Allen & Unwin, London (new ed.).

LENIN V. I. (1955-70), *Complete Works*, Editori Riuniti, Rome (this edition is referred to by the initials LO, followed by the indication of the volume and the page).

LÉVI-STRAUSS C. (2002), *Race and History. Razza e cultura* (2001), Einaudi, Turin. lewis A. (2002), *Bush and Iraq*, in "The New York Review of Books", 7 November.

LIN PIAO (1969), *Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party*, Foreign Language Publishing House, Beijing.

LOSURDO D. (1991), *Community, Death, the West. Heidegger and the Ideology of War*", Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

ID. (1993), *Democracy or Bonapartism. Triumph and Decadence of Universal Suffrage*, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

ID. (1997a), *Hegel and Germany. Philosophy and the National Question between Revolution and Reaction*, Guerini-Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies, Milan.

ID. (1997B), *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al «comunismo critico»*, Gamberetti, Rome.

ID. (2005A), *Controstoria del liberalismo*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

ID. (2005B), *Escape from History? The Russian Revolution and the Chinese Revolution Today* (1999), The City of the Sun, Naples.

ID. (2007), *The Language of the Empire*. Lexicon of American Ideology, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

ID. (2008), *Stalin. History and Criticism of a Black Legend*, Carocci, Rome. id. (2010), *Non-violence. A story out of the myth*, Laterza, Rome-Bari. id. (2011), *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns* (1992), 2 vols., La scuola di Pitagora, Naples.

ID. (2013), *The Class Struggle. A Political and Philosophical History*, Laterza, Rome-Bari. id. (2014a), *The Absent Left. Crisis, Society of the Spectacle and War*, Carocci, Rome

ID. (2014b), *Nietzsche, the aristocratic rebel. Intellectual Biography and Critical Assessment*, vol. I, *The Critique of the Revolution from the Jewish Prophets to Socialism* (2002), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

ID. (2014c), *Nietzsche, the aristocratic rebel. Intellectual Biography and Critical Assessment*, Vol. II, *The Anti-Democratic Reaction. Politics and Theoretical Surplus* (2002), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

ID. (2015), *Historical Revisionism. Problemi e miti* (1996), Laterza, Roma-Bari.

id. (2016), *A World Without Wars. The Idea of Peace from the Promises of the Past to the Tragedies of the Present*, Carocci, Rome.

ID. (2017), *Western Marxism. How he was born, how he died, how he can be reborn*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

LAusg.). ÖWITH K. (1961), *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie* (1953), Kohlhammer, Stuttgart (4

LUDENDORFF E. (1935), *Der totale Krieg*, Ludendorffs Verlag, München.

Macaulay τη. b. (1850), *Critical and Historical Essays, Contributed to The Edinburgh Review*, 5 vols., Tauchnitz, Leipzig.

MAO ZEDONG (MAO TSETUNG) (1969-75), *Selected Works*, 4 vols., Foreign Language Publishing House,

Beijing.

ID. (1979), *Revolution and Construction. Writings and speeches 1949-1947*, Einaudi, Turin.

MARGOLIN J.-L. (1998), *China: A Long March in the Night*, in S. Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism. Crimes, Terror, Repression* (1997), Mondadori, Milan.

MARTINEAU η. (1857), *British Rule in India: A Historical Sketch*, Smith, London.

Marx K. (1953), *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf) 1857-1848*, Dietz, Berlin.

MARX K., ENGELS F. (1955-89), *Werke*, Dietz, Berlin (this edition is referred to by the abbreviation MEW, followed by the indication of the volume and the page).  
IDD. (1975 ff./1990 ff.), *Gesamtausgabe*, Dietz-IMES, Berlin-Amsterdam (this edition is referenced by the abbreviation mega, followed by the indication of the part, the volume and the page).

IDD. (2003), *Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)*, Laterza, Rome-Bari.

ed.), MILIBAND R. (1968), *Labourism. Storia di una politica* (1964), Editori Riuniti, Rome (2

MILL j. s. (1946), *Considerations on representative government* (1861), Bompiani, Milan.

ID. (1963), *Collected Works*, 33 vols., University of Toronto Press-Routledge-Kegan Paul, Toronto-London.

ID. (1976), *Autobiography* (1853-70; 1st ed. 1873), Laterza, Rome-Bari.

ID. (1981), *Saggio sulla libertà* (1858), il Saggiatore, Milan.

MINI F. (2014), *The strange Russia-China couple, daughter of Obama's manipulations and mistakes*, in "Limes. Rivista italiana di Geopolitica", 8, pp. 51-64.

MIRSKY J. (1996), *River of Fire, God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, in "The New York Review of Books", 29 February, pp 39-41

MOLINARI M. (2002), A choir crosses America: no to war, in "La Stampa", 8 October.

MOSCA G. (1953), Elementi di scienza politica (1913), 2 vols., Laterza, Bari (5th ed.).

MOSSE G. L. (1975), The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars to the Third Reich (1974), il Mulino, Bologna.

MUNZI u. (1995), Vendetta 34 anni dopo?, in "Corriere della Sera", 19 October.

N ed.). IETZSCHE E. (2002), Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with the Hammer (1888), Adelphi, Milan (8

ed.). ID. (ZOOÓ), The Antichrist. Curse of Christianity (1895), Adelphi, Milan (22

NOLTE E. (1987), Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917-1945. Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus, Ullstein, Frankfurt am Main-Berlin.

PANACCIONE A. (2006), Afterword, in Z. A. Medvedev, R. A. Medvedev, Stalin unknown. In the Light of the Soviet Secret Archives (2003), Feltrinelli, Milan.

PAQUET A. (1919), Im Kommunistischen Rußland. Briefe aus Moskau, Diederichs, Jena.

PASSARINI p. (2001), Skinner: «Afghanistan? It's not a war, it resembles revenge," in "La Stampa," December 16.

PIKETTY TH. (2013), Le capital au xxi siècle, Seuil, Paris.

PIPES R. (1992), La Russia. Power and Society from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of the "Ancien Regime" (1974), Leonardo, Milan.

ed. 1966), 2 vols., Armando, Rome. POPPER K. R. (1974), The Open Society and its Enemies (1943; 5

ID. (1992a), The Lesson of This Century, Marsilio, Venice.

ID. (1992b), "Kriege führen für den Frieden", in "Der Spiegel", 23. März (interview).

ID. (1992c), I, the Pope and Gorbachev, in "La Stampa", April 9 (interview).

POURSIN j.-M., DUPUY G. (1974), Malthus (1972), Laterza, Roma-Bari.

PRESTON p. (2012), The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in the Twentieth Century Spain, Harper Press, London.

R. E. (1997), Clinton: "We used blacks as human guinea pigs. An American shame," in "Corriere della Sera," April 10.

RATZEL F. (1893), Politische Geographie der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der natürlichen Bedingungen und wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse, Oldenburg, München.

RAWLS J. (1982), A Theory of Justice (1971), Feltrinelli, Milan.

ROMANO S. (2014), The Decline of the American Empire, Longanesi, Milan.

ROSENBERG A. (1937), Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts (1930), Hoheneichen, München.

ROSSANDA R. (1976), The Limits of Progressive Democracy, in aa.vv., Da Togliatti alla nuova sinistra, Alfani, Roma.

ROSSELLI C. (1988), Political Writings, Guida, Naples.

ID. (1989-91), Scritti dell'esilio, 2 vols., Einaudi, Torino.

SCHELLING F. w. j. (1856-61a), Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen (1810), in Id., Sämtliche Werke, vol. VII, Cotta, Stuttgart-Augsburg.

ID. (1856-61b), Philosophie der Mythologie, in Id., Sämtliche Werke, vol. xi, Cotta, Stuttgart-Augsburg.

Schlesinger Jr. A. M. (1992), Four Days with Fidel: A Havana Diary, in The New York Review of Books, March 16.

SCHMID A. P. (1974), Churchills privater Krieg. Intervention und Konterrevolution im russischen Bürgerkrieg, November 1918-März 1920, Atlantis, Zürich.



SCHMIDT H. (1002), Europa braucht keinen Vormund, in "Die Zeit", I. August, 32.

SCHMITT c. (1985), Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus (1923; 2nd Ausg. 1926), Duncker & Humblot, Berlin.

Schneider J.J. (1994), The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State, Presidio, Novato.

ed. 1783), Mondadori, Milan. SMITH A. (1977), Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1775-6; 3

ID. (1982), Lectures on Jurisprudence (1762-63, 1766), Liberty Classics, Indianapolis (= vol. V of ed. Oxford University Press, Glasgow 1978).

SNOW E. (1967), Red Star over China (1937) Einaudi, Turin (3rd ed.).

SPENCER H. (1981), The Man versus the State: With Six Essays on Government, Society, and Freedom (1843-84), Liberty Classics, Indianapolis.

SPENGLER o. (1921), Preußentum und Sozialismus (1919), Beck, München.

STALIN I. V. (1953), Speech at the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1952), in Id., Problems of Peace, Edizioni di cultura sociale, Rome.

STERNHELL Z. (1978), La droite révolutionnaire. Les origines françaises du fascisme, 1889-1914, Seuil, Paris.

TAINE H. (1986), The Origins of Contemporary France. L'antico regime (1876), Adelphi, Milan.

TOCQUEVILLE A. DE (1866), Correspondance et oeuvres posthumes, Lévy, Paris.

ID. (1951), Oeuvres complètes, Gallimard, Paris.

TODOROV T. (2012), The impossible war, in "la Repubblica", 26 June.

TOGLIATTI P. (1973-84), Opere, 6 voll., Editori Riuniti, Rome.

TORRI M. (2000), Storia dell'India, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

TUCKER R. C. (1990), *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941*, Norton, New York-London.

VALLI B. (2014), *Between Stalin and Nazism, Ukraine awakens the nightmares of the past*. in "la Repubblica", 13 March.

WADE W. C. (1997), *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford.

WEBER M. (1968), *Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften* (1917), in Id., *Methodologische Schriften*, Studienausgabe, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main.

"Die Welt Kompakt" (2013) = Zu links, in "Die Welt Kompakt", 3. Juni.

WERTH N. (2007), *La terreur et le désarroi. Stalin et son système*, Perrin, Paris. YOUNG-BRUEHL E. (1990), *Hannah Arendt, 1906-1979. Per amore del mondo* (1982), Bollati Boringhieri, Turin.

ZIZEK S. (2009a), *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2008), Verso, London-New York.

ID. (2009B), *In defense of lost causes* (2008), Ponte alle Grazie, Milan. id. (2011a), *L'idée du communisme comme universel concret*, in A. Badiou, S. Zizek, *L'idée du communisme*, vol. II, Lignes, Paris.

ID. (2011B), *Welcome to Interesting Times!* (2010), in aa.vv., *Revolution and Subjectivity*, Matadero, Madrid, pp. 125-36.

ID. (2012), *Benvenuti in tempi interessanti* (2010), Ponte alle Grazie, Milan.

ID. (2013), *A Year Dreamed Dangerously* (2012), Ponte alle Grazie, Milan.

## Index of Names

Acton John Enterich Edward Dalberg (Lord Acton), 41,  
43n  
Ahmadinejad Mahmud, 172  
Alexander II, Tsar of Russia, 178  
Allende Salvador, 163  
Aly Götz, 41  
Archer Devon, 172  
Arendt Hannah, 45-81  
Arndt Ernst Moritz, 127-8  
Asor Rosa Alberto, 174-7  
Badiou Alain, 144-5, 149,151 153,163  
Bava Beccaris Fiorenzo, 110  
Beaumont Gustave de, 106  
Bebel August, 133-5  
Benedict Henry, 107  
Benjamin Walter, 141-4, 145 and n, 150, 156,158-9  
Berlin Isaiah, 90 e n  
Bernstein Eduard, 80-2,186  
Bertinotti Fausto, 41-2, 44  
Biden Joseph Robinette Jr. (aka Joe), 172  
Biden Robert Hunter, 172  
Bismarck Otto von, 166  
Blair Anthony Charles Lynton (known as Tony), 46  
Blanqui Louis-Auguste, 167  
Bloch Ernst, 133-5, 138-9,146  
Bobbio Norberto, 55-8, 69, 71, 74, 86-8, 90 and n,  
97,100-15, 117 119, 149  
Boffa Giuseppe, 46  
Bougie Celestin, 37  
Brecht Bertolt, 30,159-60

Brennan John, 171  
Brezhnev Leonid Ilyich, 151  
Brown John, 178  
Brzezinski Zbigniew, 30,169  
Bukharin Nikolai, 38 and n, 126,142  
Burke Edmund, 51  
Cahen Janine, 108  
Caillé Alain, 63, 66, 68,114-6  
Calhoun John Caldwell, 42  
Calogero Guido, 94  
Campe Joachim Heinrich, 59  
Carducci Giosuè, 65  
Carr Edward Hallet, 146  
Carter James Earljr. (said Jimmy), 169  
Castro Fidel, 151,182  
Catherwood Christopher, 107  
Chiang Kai-shek, 154  
Churchill Winston, 39,107  
Clark Christopher, 40, 58n  
Clinton Hillary, 168  
Columbus Christopher, 187  
Comito Vincenzo, 129  
Crèvecoeur John Hector St.John de, 59  
Crispi Francesco, 93 Croce Benedetto, 40-1, 53-5,  
73,110-1  
Cromwell Oliver, 138  
Dahrendorf Ralf, 54  
D'Annunzio Gabriele, 110  
Del Boca Angelo, 95  
della Volpe Galvano, 90 and n, 91  
Deng Xiaoping, 126, 145, 149, 160, 170-1,176,183-4  
Diamond Jared, 131-2  
Dimaggio Anthony, 172  
Dimitrov Georgi, 151  
Dupuy Gabriel, 47  
Duverger Maurice, 45 e n

Einaudi Luigi, 73  
 Eisenhower Dwight David, 103  
 Engels Friedrich, 27, 29-30, 37, 51, 60-I, 64-5, 70-1, 74,  
 79-80, 119, 123, 127, 133, 136-7, 139-41, 150, 152, 156,  
 165, 167, 175, 178-81, 186-7  
 Fabbri Dario, 171  
 Ferguson Niall, 75,103,116,173  
 Fichte Johann Gottlieb, 122  
 Figes Orlando, 143  
 Fishman Ted C., 130  
 Fontaine André, 103  
 Fourier Jean-Baptiste-Joseph, 80-1,155, 157-8  
 Francis of Assisi, 134  
 Franco Francisco, 84,155  
 Franklin Benjamin, 104 e n  
 Furet François, 36, 40  
 Gandhi Mohandas Karamchand, 43, 94,114  
 Genghis Khan, 72,105  
 Genovese Eugene Dominic, 50  
 Dear John, 111  
 Gernet Jacques, 154  
 Jesus Christ, 56,135,137  
 Gaddafi Mu'ammar, 33,168  
 Gingrich Newt, 50  
 Giolitti Antonio, 95  
 John Scotus Erigena, 134  
 Gobetti Piero, 93, 96, 110  
 Gobineau Joseph-Arthur de, 112  
 Gorbachev Mikhail, 32,145  
 Gramsci Antonio, 40, 73, 96,125,136,  
 146,151,167,173,175  
 Guevara Ernesto (known as el Che), 182  
 Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia, 39,  
 41  
 Gumplowicz Ludwig, 61, 81  
 Halévy Elie, 37, Hamilton Alexander, 177 e n

Hardt Michael, 134-5,152,155,162  
Hayek Friedrich August von, 49  
Hegel Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 36, 62,102,123,137-8,161-2,165  
Heidegger Martin, 158-9  
Herold Jean Christopher, 62  
Hikmet Nazim, 30  
Himmler Heinrich, 41  
Hitler Adolf, 37, 41, 61, 95-6,109,11 169-70,181  
Ho Chi Minh City, 91  
Hobbes Thomas, 38  
Hobhouse Leonard Trelawney, 76 n, 77-8, 82, 88, 94-101,104-5  
Hobson John Atkinson, 78, 81-3, 8 94, 96,104,117,119  
Hofbauer Hannes, 30,33  
Hoffmeister Johannes, 62  
Hollande François, 46  
Holloway John, 153  
Hong Xiuquan, 143  
Hoover Herbert, 40  
Hugo Victor, 42  
Hussein Saddam, 28, 46  
Ignatieff Michael, 29  
Jardin André, 80n  
Jefferson Thomas, 48, 60  
Jessen Jens, 29 Jünger Ernst, 39n  
Kant Immanuel, 60  
Kautsky Karl, 42,180  
Kelley Robin D. G., 91  
Kennedy Edward Moore (aka Ted), 29  
Kerry John Forbes, 172  
Kershaw Ian, 3 5  
Kipling Rudyard, 111  
Kissinger Henry, 39,163  
Koss Stephen, 75  
Kropotkin Pyotr Alexevich, 44

La Bruyère Jean de, 128  
 Lacouture Jean, 91  
 Lafargue Paul, 42  
 Lasky Harold Joseph, 85  
 Larouche Serge, 114-5  
 Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), 29-30, 38, 46, 69, 72-4, 77, 81-3, 96-7, 105, 109, 119, 136, 140, 142, 146, 175, 180, 187  
 Lévi-Strauss Claude, 130-1  
 Lewis Anthony, 29  
 Lieven Anatol, 29  
 Lin Piao, 148, 182-3  
 Lincoln Abraham, 48  
 Lombardo Radice Lucio, 175  
 Losurdo Domenico, 28-9, 40n, 43 and n, 44, 45n, 51, 56, 58 and n, 60, 71n, 75n, 80n, 95, 104n, 114, 116, 122-4, 126, 128, 140-1, 145n, 147-8, 165-6, 168, 170n, 171n, 174n, 177n, 180, 182, 186, 187n  
 Lowith Karl, 135  
 Ludendorff Erich, 39n  
 Louis Bonaparte, 58  
 Lula (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva), 172  
 Macaulay Thomas Babington, 106  
 Machiavelli Nicholas, 102  
 Malthus Thomas Robert, 49, 64, 70  
 Mao Zedong, 56, 88, 92, 124, 147-9, 154, 170-1, 182-3  
 Marcos, Subcomandante, 153  
 Margolin Jean-Louis, 170  
 Martineau Harriet, 66  
 Marx Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny (née von Westphalen), 126  
 Marx Karl, 27, 29-30, 36, 46, 51-6, 59-61, 63-5, 69-71, 79-80, 84, 87, 105 and n, 119, 123, 126-7, 131-1, 135-7, 139-41, 145, 148, 150-1, 156, 165-7, 178-81, 185-7  
 Massillon Jean Baptiste, 129  
 Miliband Ralph, 108

Mill John Stuart, 66,69-70,71 and n, 72, 77-8, 94,107  
Mini Fabio, 173  
Mirsky Jonathan, 154  
Mitterrand François, 108  
Molinari Maurizio, 29  
Mollet Guy, 108  
Monroe James, 91,103,115,184  
Mosca Gaetano, 46  
Moses, 145  
George Lachmann, 38n  
Mubarak Hosni, 144  
Muhammad Ahmad (known as the Mahdi), 75, 143  
Müntzer Thomas, 56,136  
Munzi Ulderico, 107  
Mussolini Benito, 83,167-8  
Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, 108,149  
Nasser (Giamäl Husain ' Abd an-Näs-ir), 102-3  
Blacks Antonio, 134-5, 152 155. 162  
Neruda Pablo, 30  
Nietzsche Friedrich, 56,122,135-6,164-5  
Nolte Ernst, 39n, 111  
Origen, 134  
Panaccione Andrea, 35  
Paul of Tarsus, 136  
Paquet Alfons, 39n  
Passarini Paolo, 28  
Piketty Thomas, 29  
Pinochet Augusto José Ramón, 173  
Pipes Richard, 36  
Pitt John, 47  
Plato, 53  
Polanyi Karl, 50  
Popper Karl Raimund, 53, 55-7, 58 and n  
Poursin Jean-Marie, 47  
Pouteau Micheline, 108  
Preston Paul, 156



Proudhon Pierre-Joseph, 46,123-4  
 Ratzel Friedrich, 48  
 Rawls John, 101  
 Renan Joseph-Ernest, 180  
 Rhodes Cecil, 180  
 Romano Sergio, 173,185  
 Roosevelt Theodore, 111  
 ROSENBERG ALFRED, 58,109  
 Rossanda Rossana, 174-5  
 Rosselli Carlo, 83-5, 88-9, 110  
 Rousseau Jean-Jacques, 36,122  
 Saint-Simon, Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, Count of, 80-1  
 Schelling Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von, 47, 57-8  
 Schlesinger Arthur M, Jr., 151  
 Schmid Alex P., 39  
 Schmidt Helmut, 29,171  
 Schmitt Carl, 158  
 Schneider James J., 39  
 Schoelcher Victor, 44, 45 and n  
 Skinner Quentin, 28  
 Sloterdijk Peter, 164-5  
 Smith Adam, 100-1,121-2,177  
 Snow Edgar, 92,154  
 Soros George, 172  
 Spencer Herbert, 64, 75 and n  
 Spengler Oswald, 41  
 Staël-Holstein, Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Madame  
 de, 62  
 Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovic Dzugasvili), 35-  
 6,125,147,169,175  
 Stern Fritz, 40  
 Sternhell Zeev, 109  
 Stiglitz Joseph Eugene, 29  
 Taine Hippolyte, 129  
 Thomas James Henry, 108  
 Tocqueville Alexis de, 44-5, 49, 52-3

64, 80n, 104,106,111-2,114,157  
Todorov Tzvetan, 33  
Togliatti Paimiro, 73-4, 87, 110, 145 149,174-5  
Torri Michelguglielmo, 94  
Toussaint Louverture François-Dominique, 108,170  
Trotsky Lev, 125-6  
Tucker Robert Charles, 36  
Valli Bernardo, 34  
Wade Wyn Craig, 92  
Weber Max, 37  
Werth Nicholas, 36  
Wesley John, 43 e n  
Wilson Thomas Woodrow, 91  
Young-Bruehl Elisabeth, 45  
Zizek Slavoj, 144, 149-50, 153, 161n 163-5,169-73