

Communism Against Democracy - Communism

#4

Introduction

Most of the time, within the communist movement itself, ready-made ideas inherited from the dominant ideology prevent a full understanding of the revolutionary program. On many essential questions, it is not the communist position, confirmed by the experiences of countless working-class revolts that is put forward but rather the social-democratic, lassalleian "tradition" (whether or not radicalized by the leninist terminology), that is, what the bourgeoisie itself understands about the revolutionary movement. And so, on the fundamental question of democracy, the great myths of the French Revolution - that archetype all bourgeois revolutions, Freedom, Equality and Fraternity, are fully upheld by pseudo-marxists: considering that the bourgeoisie has betrayed its own ideals, they assign the task of realizing them to the proletariat! And of course the leftists keep fighting for the total achievement of democratic rights, for "perfect" democracy. For those idiots, democracy is but a form of government, the very ideal, in fact, so far as government is concerned, which when eventually applied in full, will usher in a new Golden Age. And so these sycophants have to democratize the education system, the police and all State apparatus -in short, they seek to democratize democracy. Democracy is always presented as the ideal to be attained, and all our miseries and capitalist oppression are seen as the result of a bad or incomplete application of this sacrosanct democracy. For the pseudo-marxists (from trotskyists to councilists), democracy is the pure form, the ideal that capital cannot realize, but which the proletariat eventually could, in the mythical form of "workers' democracy". And so, they simply oppose bourgeois democracy (restricted and betraying the ideal) to the ideal to be realized: workers' democracy (trotskyist councilist version), people's democracy (stalinist version) or again, direct democracy (libertarian version). Here they are again, those eternal reformers of the world who, having first defined the ideal to be attained as the positive pole of capital -Freedom, Equality, Fraternity- can see in today's reality nothing but the result of wrong application of this ideal by big bad capital, its negative pole. All those people can not understand that there is no such thing as a "democratic ideal" or, to be more exact, that the democratic ideal is just the ideal image of the reality of capitalist dictatorship. And in the same way that the solution of the celestial family lies in the terrestrial family, so the solution of celestial democracy (the democratic ideal) lies in the terrestrial reality of its application, that is, in the terrestrial reality of capital's worldwide dictatorship. Contrary to all those apologists of the system (even, and above all, in its reformed form), marxists tackles democracy not as a form of government more or less properly applied, but as a content, as the activity of management - politics- of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore democracy (whatever its form: parliamentary, bonapartist,...) is nothing but the management of capitalism. As Marx put it, the bourgeoisie has really and definitively achieved freedom (to sell one's labour power or else... to die), fraternity (between atomized citizen) and equality (between purchasers and sellers of commodities). The bourgeoisie has totally democratized the world, since in its own world (that of circulation and exchange of commodities) pure democracy is realized. Chasing the myth of a "good" democracy, as all democrats (even "workers'" democrats) do actually serves to reinforce, as an idea and so in its realization, the best "possible" management of capitalism what ever form it might take -parliamentary, "working-class", fascist, monarchist,...- it reinforces the foundation of the system: wage slavery. Indeed, as this text will show,

democracy is not one (or the "best") of the forms of management of capital, but is the foundation, the substance of capitalist management, and this, because the content common to the substance of the capitalist mode of production - twosided character of the commodity labour power- and the substance of democracy -make the individuals, and so their labour power appear as a commodity. The capitalist mode of production is therefore the first and also the last mode of production that has to present the individual as a citizen, totally isolated, atomized and alienated in civil society -the community of atomized individuals (that is a des-humanized, non-species community)- because the capitalist mode of production, in order to develop, needs the proletarians (free from all ties to the glebe) to own only their labour power, and so always be ready to sell themselves for a wage (the value of which is determined, like any other commodity's, by the average time socially necessary for its reproduction). This whole process of atomization and subsumption of human beings produces one of the most disgusting symptoms of capitalism: individualism.

The content of every bourgeois state (whatever its form) is therefore democracy, for democracy is the capitalist organisation of atomized proletarians so as to make them spew out more and more value. Marx had already guessed this essential content of democracy when he criticized Hegel's ideas about the state:

"Hegel starts from the state and makes man the subjectified state; democracy starts from man and makes the state objectified man. Just as it is not religion which creates man but man who creates religion, so it is not the constitution which creates the people but the people who creates the constitution. In a certain respect the relation of democracy to all other forms of the state is like the relation of Christianity to all other forms of religion. Christianity is the religion par excellence, the essence of religion - deified man as a particular religion. Similarly, democracy is the essence of all state constitutions - socialised men as a particular state constitution. (...) Man doesn't exist for the law but the law for man - it is a human manifestation; whereas in the other forms of the state man is a legal manifestation. That is the fundamental distinction of democracy."

Marx - Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law.

Through Marx, the whole filiation and invariance of communism asserts itself more and more clearly, breaking with bourgeois socialism, breaking with reformism, breaking with democracy. From time to time, however, communists under the heavy weight of bourgeois ideology, did fall back to democratic ground. That is what the Italian Abstentionist Communist Left criticized, when writing that:

"Though they were the destroyers of the whole democratic bourgeois ideology, it cannot be denied that Marx and Engels still gave too much credit to democracy and thought that universal suffrage could bring about advantages which had not been discredited yet."

"Avanti" 1918, The Lessons from the New History.

Yet despite its mistakes the communist movement has always asserted its anti-democratic character more and more strongly, be it with Babeuf, Dejacque and Coeurderoy, be it with Blanqui (and his famous "London toast") and (at certain times) Lenin, be it with the Communist Lefts (from Italy, of

course, with Bordiga and the Communist Left from Italy in exile; but also the KAPD - Gorter/Schröder wing). The question is getting clearer and clearer: how to remove from the communist program all bourgeois leftovers, all concessions to bourgeois socialists, to democrats?

"What stumbling block is this that endangers tomorrow's revolution? The deplorable popularity of all those bourgeois disguised as tribunists... is the stumbling block against which yesterday's revolution crashed. Curse be on us, should the indulgence of the masses allow these men to rise to power on the ever closer day of victory."

Blanqui - 1851

"Political freedom is a farce and the worst possible kind of slavery (...) So is political equality: this is why democracy must be torn to pieces as well as any other form of government."

Engels - Progress of Social Reform on the Continent.

But with the Italian Communist Left the very content of democracy (and not only the parliamentary, elective form of government that is called democracy) is tackled from a communist standpoint:

"The workers movement has sprung up as a negation of democracy (...) There exists a fundamental opposition between the institutions of the democratic state and the creation of working class organisms. Through the first, the proletariat is tied to the democratic fiction; through the second, the workers assert, in opposition to the bourgeois government, the opposite historical course which leads them to their liberation."

Bilan - Organ of the Italian Fraction of the internationalist Communist Left

In the same way as Bilan brilliantly analyzed fascism not as the negation of democracy (which means "justifying" the anti-fascism, interclassist front) but, on the contrary, "as a purifying process of the democratic state", so Octobre - the monthly organ of the International Bureau of the Fractions of the Communist Left - drew the essential, fundamental lessons:

"The idea of proletarian dictatorship gets spoilt whenever it is linked, directly or indirectly, to the democratic principle."

Octobre No 5 - 1939

It is to continue this fundamental work of destroying democracy that we carry out with our militant activity. With this text, with the whole of the material we have already published, we wish to give revolutionary militants a global analysis that can facilitate the communists' continuous critique of democracy, including, above all, so-called "workers' democracy" (1).

Genesis of Democracy

From the very origin, democracy expresses its two-sided character like the two-sided nature of the commodity (use value and exchange value) which develops alongside it (see below). Democracy is both the "power of the people", of the majority, of the "pebs" and the dictatorial expression of the dominant class over the dominated majority.

Once the natural community is dissolved through exchange, democracy appears as the mythical expression of a "new community", thus re-creating artificially the primitive community just destroyed: the people ('demos' in Greek)

being the whole of the citizen, a whole based upon the negation of class antagonisms for the benefit of an a-classist mass called the people, the nation,... In this sense, democracy really exists. Yet it also exists only ideally (in the realm of ideas) as a myth/reality camouflaging, and so reinforcing materially, the dictatorial power of the dominant class. Thus as soon as it emerges, democracy develops its two-sided character: both unification of the people within a restricted, non-human community (which we called fictitious community), and destruction of any attempt to re-create a true community of interests, that is, reconstitution of a class opposed the dominant one (which is organized into a state). And, whereas all the exploited classes in the past organized their struggle on the basis of limited, contingent, non-universal historical interests, now with the proletariat (first class to be both exploited and revolutionary) there appears the first and last class that has one universal, non-contingent historical interest: the liberation of humanity.

If we consider the archetype of what is usually praised as democracy -Athenian democracy- we see a society divided into antagonistic classes in which the most exploited productive class -the slaves- is quite simply excluded from civil society (the slaves not being regarded as human beings, but only as an animal productive force), and in which only the members of the dominant class -the citizens- can get at the famous Athenian democracy, since managing "public affairs" (res publica) requires a lot of free time, or, in other words, requires a lot of riches (i.e. slaves). In this sense, the specialisation and the specialists of "public affairs" (division of labour, hence division into classes) brings about politics: a popular sphere devoted to the management of the city on behalf of the whole of the people, of the nation (hence the necessity of mediation -see below). Politics and democracy therefore go hand in hand. Politics, as a separated sphere, as the essential activity of the dominant class, exists only because democracy exists, even if in a rudimentary form. Politics exists only through democracy, since it is only in class societies -societies in which people are separated from each other, from production, and so from their lives- that there is a need to conciliate the classes (and so to negate their antagonism) and at the same time to impose the dictatorship of the dominant class. This kind of society thus requires a social mediation -politics- to "unifying" the separated (more precisely, "adding" them to each other) to "unifying" everything that society has separated, and this, for the sole benefit of the dominant class. Democracy implies politics; politics is democratic in its very essence.

"Where the political state has attained its full degree of development man leads a double life, a life in heaven and a life on earth, not only in his mind, in his consciousness, but in reality. He lives in the political community where he regards himself as a communal being, and in civil society, where he is active as a private individual, regards other men as means, debases himself to a means and becomes a plaything of alien powers. The relationship of the political state to civil society is just as spiritual as the relationship of heaven to earth. The state stands in the same opposition to civil society and overcomes it in the same way as religion overcomes the restrictions of the profane world, ie. it has to acknowledge it again, reinstate it and allow itself to be dominated by it. Man in his immediate reality, in civil society, is a profane being. Here, where he regards himself and is regarded by others as a real individual, he is an illusory phenomenon. In the state, on the other hand, where he is considered to be a species-being, he is the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty, he is divested of his real individual life and filled with an unreal universality." (...) "The splitting of

man into his public and private self and the displacement of religion from the state to civil society is not just one step in the process of political emancipation but its completion. Hence political emancipation neither abolishes nor tries to abolish man's real religiosity." (...) "The power of religion is the religion of power." (...) "The members of the political state are religious because of the dualism between individual life and species life, between the life of civil society and political life. They are religious inasmuch as man considers political life, which is far removed from his individuality, to be his true life and inasmuch as religion is here the spirit of civil society and the expression of the separation and distance of man from man." (...)

"Political democracy is Christian inasmuch as it regards man - not just one man but all men - as a sovereign and supreme being; but man in his uncultivated, unsocial aspect, man in his contingent existence, man just as he is, man as he has been corrupted, lost to himself, sold, and exposed to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements by the entire organisation of our society - in a word, man who is not yet a true species being. The sovereignty of man - but of man as an alien being distinct from actual man - is the fantasy, the dream, the postulate of christianity, where as in democracy it is a present and material reality, a secular maxim."

Marx - On The Jewish Question

As we see in this long quotation from Marx, the emergence of the separated sphere -politics- really corresponds to the antagonism, the opposition between the "uneducated, unsocial" bourgeois individual, organized into a non-human community -addition of individuals, of atomized citizens- and the constitution of a real community based upon common historical interests -the constitution of the proletariat into a class, hence into a party- negating the free thinking individual (and individualist) in order to posit the species-being of humanity: Gemeinwesen.

The bourgeois society, synthesis and product of all class societies of the past, is above all the society of politics (and so of democracy) the one in which all the citizens have, as buyers and sellers of commodities, the same right and duty to manage the city and the society, that is, commonly speaking, "to politick". And whereas in the Athenian democracy, politics was a privilege for the dominant class (since democracy had not extended yet to the whole of society) at the expense of slaves, under capitalism, the realm of complete democracy, each proletarian must "politick", that is, must be mediated/objectified through politics. The wage slaves are even deprived of any communal life (even as excluded slaves), in contrast to their Roman and Greek ancestors who were collectively excluded from the political sphere, from democracy. The wage slaves are totally atomized and subsumed through democracy. The ancient slaves, as well as the serfs could at least share a common feeling of exclusion (and thus rebel -see Spartacus and the numerous peasants' revolts), the wage slaves, as citizens -violent negation by democracy of any attempt to reconstitute a class force- have no feeling anymore, except of being mere commodities in the sphere of circulation -political commodities- and as such, of being free and equal. The ancient slaves were still -though negatively, since they were slaves- tied to a community, the degenerated remains of primitive communism (see Spartacus' City of Sun: the "realization" of the myth of the return to the primitive communism), whereas the modern proletarians, subjected to democracy, have nothing anymore.

Against this process of subjection of human beings into, and through, democracy and its hireling called politics, the communist revolution is no political revolution (as the bourgeois revolution was), but a social revolution through which the proletariat accomplishes the ultimate political deed: dissolution of the separate sphere that politics is. This way already Marx's prospect in 1843:

"The bourgeois society is the end of politics; it derives from this that the proletariat, if it doesn't want to operate within the existing state, upon the enemy ground, must not "politick". More precisely, it must claim only one political act, that of destroying the bourgeois political society, at the same time a military act."

Marx - Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State

Since the communist program is in its essence anti-democratic it is therefore anti-political. It rejects the bourgeois, politicist view of a "revolution" which would be a change in the state apparatus (lassalleian, social-democrat, leninist tradition) for the benefit of the necessary destruction of the State that is, the destruction of politics.

In his controversy against A.Ruge Marx developed this point of view:

"... a social revolution possesses a total point of view because - even if it is confined to only one factory district - it represents a protest by man against a dehumanised life, because it proceeds from the point of view of the particular, real individual, because the community against whose separation from himself the individual is reacting, is the true community of man, human nature. In contrast, the political soul of a revolution consists in the tendency of the classes with no political power to put an end to their isolation from the state and from power. Its point of view is that of the state, of an abstract totality which exists only through its separation from real life and which is unthinkable in the absence of an organised antithesis between the universal idea and the individual existence of man. In accordance with the limited and contradictory nature of the political soul a revolution inspired by it organises a dominant group within society at the cost of society."

Marx - Critical Notes on the Article "The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian".

Through this refusal of a revolution "with a political soul", refusal of a mere change in the form of the state, as the bourgeois revolution was, the communist revolution "with a social soul" can be characterized as a revolution which, as the ultimate political act totally destroying the whole state apparatus and its foundation -the law of value- is the radical, social transformation of the whole society, the dictatorship of the proletariat for the abolition of wage labour.

"But whether the idea of a social revolution with a political soul is a paraphrase or nonsense there is no doubt about the rationality of a political revolution with a social soul. All revolution -the overthrow of the existing ruling power and the dissolution of the old order- is a political act. But without revolution socialism cannot be made possible. It stands in need of this political act just as it stands in need of destruction and dissolution. But as soon as its organising functions begin and its goal, its soul emerges, socialism throws its political mask aside."

Marx - Ibid

Marx had also perfectly understood the essential connection between the commodity and democracy, even as early as the ancient societies:

"Aristotle himself was unable to extract this fact, that, in the form of commodity-values, all labour is expressed as equal human labour and therefore as labour of equal quality, by inspection from the form of value, because Greek society was founded on the labour of slaves, hence had as its natural basis the inequality of men and of their labour powers. The secret of the expression of value, namely the equality and equivalence of all kinds of labour because and in so far as they are human labour in general, could not be deciphered until the concept of human equality had already acquired the permanence of a fixed popular opinion. This however becomes possible only in a society where the commodity-form is the universal form of the product of labour, hence the dominant social relation is between men as possessors of commodities."

Marx - Capital Vol 1

It is therefore only the capitalist mode of production, which is above all the mode of commodity production (where the universal commodity is money as universal equivalent), that democracy, already present once the class societies emerged, can develop fully as the content -the substance- of capitalist dictatorship. Capitalism is the system that concludes and synthesizes the cycle of value, which goes from the dissolution of natural community to capitalism ruling the whole planet; the system that produces and requires the proletarian/citizen, the singular individual as mere purchaser/seller of commodities (and as such, free equal and free). It also produces and requires proletarians as a mere commodity, among others, this occurs through the sale of their labour power. The capitalist mode of production is therefore the mode of production where the proletarian individual is deeply atomized and, at the same time, "unified" within a fictitious unity: the people, the nation,... It is, above all, the mode of production of commodities, and so, of democracy. This mode of production, and only this one, universalizes and fully achieves democracy. So the proletariat has no democratic task whatsoever to realize. The whole of its movement is that of the destruction of democracy. That is what Marx used to reply to the bourgeois socialists of his time -today's lefties- who wanted to "depict socialism as the realization of the ideals of bourgeois society articulated by the French Revolution":

"With that, then, the complete freedom of the individual is posited: voluntary transaction; no force on either side; positing itself as means or as serving, only as means, in order to posit the self as end in itself, as dominant and primary; finally, the self-seeking interest which brings nothing of a higher order to realization; the other is also recognised and acknowledged as one who likewise realizes his self-seeking interest, so that both know that the common interest exists only in the duality, many sidedness, and autonomous development of the exchanges between self-seeking interests. The general interest is precisely the generality of self-seeking interests. Therefore, when the economic form, exchange, posits the all-sided equality of its subjects, then the content, the individual as well as the objective material which drives towards the exchange, is freedom: Equality and Freedom are thus not only respected in exchange based on exchange values but, also, the exchange of exchange values is the productive, real, basis of all equality and freedom."

"... exchange value or, more precisely, the money system is in fact the system of equality and freedom, and that the disturbances which they encounter in the further development of the system are disturbances inherent in it, are merely the realization of equality and freedom, which prove to be inequality and unfreedom."

Marx's - Grundrisse

"In the sphere of circulation of commodities, there are no classes, everybody is a citizen, everybody appears as a buyer and seller of goods, equal, free and owner. Even when we buy or sell our labour power, we are in the paradise of human rights and liberties. Each one is aiming at his own private interests in the reign of equality, liberty and private property."

Liberty: because the buyer and the seller of commodities (inc. labour power) do not obey any other rule than their own free will.

Equality: because in the world of commodities everybody is a buyer and a seller, and everybody gets a value equal to the value contained in the goods they are selling, exchanging equivalent for equivalent.

Property: because each one appears, in the world of exchange, as an owner of their commodity and they can only dispose of what belongs to them."

Communism No 1

That is exactly what Marx explains in Capital:

"The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property..."

Marx - Capital 1, The Transformation of Money into Capital

Circulation is therefore the paradise of bourgeois rights, the sphere where democracy rules most perfectly through money. In circulation, money is the community of capital; money is the mediation which unites all individuals as buyers and sellers, and dissolves any other community. Money, like politics, is an essential mediation of democracy. No money, no democracy; no democracy, no money.

Money as the Community of Capital

It was Marx who defined the most clearly the bases to understand the radical opposition between the human community (which primitive communism was already pregnant with, though limited by and subjected to the dictatorship of nature and scarcity) and the expression, getting stronger and stronger alongside the cycle of value, of the constitution of another community involving all human kind for the benefit of value, and not of human beings.

After he has developed the several attributes of money -money as measure of values, money as medium of circulation, money as material of wealth (see Capital, chap.III)- Marx goes on to the third attribute which "presupposes the first two and constitutes their unity", how is "the God among commodities" how "from its servile role, in which it appears as mere medium of circulation, it suddenly changes into the lord and god of the world of commodities. It

represents the divine existence of commodities, while they represent its earthly form." (...) "Money is therefore not only the object but also the fountainhead of greed." Once it reaches this stage of autonomy, money -"not only the object, but also the fountainhead of wealth"- posits itself both as the most dissolving element of the ancient communities (it is the new God winning over those preceding it) and as the one and only community. Money is therefore the dissolving element which makes everything democratic, which enables democracy to grow freely.

"Money is itself the community, and can tolerate none other standing above it. But this presupposes the full development of exchange values, hence a corresponding organisation of society."

Marx - Grundrisse

Under capital, money is the new community, it is the mediation which unites things and people. Marx speaks of "nexus rerum": what unites things:

"As material representative of general wealth, as individualised exchange value, money must be the direct object, aim and product of general labour, the labour of all individuals. Labour must directly produce exchange value, ie. money. It must therefore be wage labour."

Marx - Grundrisse

Money as community of capital is therefore the unity of those singular individuals, those citizens, negation of classes, as wage slaves. Where the wage system exists, the non-human community of money exists; where the wage system did not exist, money dissolved the ancient community in order to impose itself and impose wage labour.

"Where money itself is not the community it must dissolve the community."

Marx - Grundrisse

Under capitalism, each individual exists only as a producer of exchange value, of money, and money itself is both the social mediation -addition of singular individuals monetarily worthy of being part of civil society- and the very substance of alienated human beings, since they only exist as money as exploited human.

"It is the elementary precondition of bourgeois society that labour should directly produce exchange value, ie. money; and similarly that money should directly purchase labour, and therefore the labourer, but only in so far as he alienates (verausstert) his activity in the exchange. Wage labour on one side, capital on the other, are therefore only other forms of developed exchange value and of money (as the incarnation of exchange value). Money thereby directly and simultaneously becomes the real community, since it is the general substance of survival for all, and at the same time the social product of all."

"But as we have seen in money the community (gemeinwesen) is at the same time a mere abstraction, a mere external, accidental thing for the individual, and at the same time merely a means for his satisfaction as an isolated individual. The community of antiquity presupposes a quite different relation to, and on the part of the individual. The development of money in its third role therefore smashes this community. All production is an objectification (Vergegenständlich-ung) of the individual. In money

(exchange value), however, the individual is not objectified in his natural quality, but in a social quality (relation) which is, at the same time, external to him."

Marx - Grundrisse

Thus money is both the universal commodity (as material representative of wealth) and the "non-commodity" (as mere medium of circulation). In the capitalist mode of production -which is the mode of production for exchange value, and so for money (M-C-M'), the latter being community of capital, the inhuman community of alienated individuals- people are subsumed by money (and the same is true of politics), and in so far as they are members of this fictitious community, that is, as circulating commodities, they are free and equal, they are citizens, they are among the atoms of a realized democracy. The capitalist mode of production is the mode of production of democracy of politics, of politics, of money. Complete democracy requires the development of money (and so of value). And the communist movement, since it destroys the mode of production of, and for, money (M-C-M', $M' = M + \Delta M$), also destroys democracy as the community of capital, as the community of money. Democracy is therefore the community of capital, the very foundation/ substance of capitalist dictatorship -the dictatorship of money, of the law of value. And this fictitious community (fictitious in opposition to the truly human community to be create: the proletariat organized and directed into communist party) is materialized through a serie of a-classist groupings (which negate the classes and their antagonism) having all democracy as their substance. Be it the people, the nation religion, politics or money... all these "communities of capital" through which, and in which, the citizens are organized and the proletariat disorganized, are in the last instance, nothing but forms of the fictitious community, of democracy, of dictatorship of the law of value, of money and of capital.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat against Workers Democracy

In the preceding chapters of this study, we have seen that democracy is fundamentally linked to all the essential categories of capitalism: commodity production, money, capital, etc. Continuing on from this it only remains to deal with the all too famous "workers'" democracy which essentially comes down to considering the proletariat, its movement and thus its dictatorship, as having the same content and criteria as those of capital... or more precisely, as having the characteristics of capitalism purged of its most "unacceptable" features. And pretending that "workers'" democracy is the only true democracy, democracy realized at last. For all these democretins the bourgeoisie (because it is the incarnation of evil) is incapable of fully realizing ideal democracy (which is false because as we have seen this pure democracy is achieved in its "garden of Eden" -the circulation of commodities). For these democrats, it thus falls on the proletariat to fully realize this sacrosanct democracy and its cortege of rights... its majoritarian and humanitarian fetishes. These "fine talkers" inject the democratic poison into workers' struggles in the following ways: the need to vote before struggling, the need to bend before the will of the majority, to submit to democratic discipline... that is to say, bourgeois discipline.

The entire history of the workers' movement testifies to precisely the opposite of these policies of sabotage. If one takes the example of the Russian Revolution, it is clear that all the class positions, the real break (to be sure insufficient) with the bourgeois Social Democratic tradition were always the work of minorities and each time needed to be asserted by force against the majorities, against the dominant ideas (2).

- For example: the taking up of internationalist positions by Lenin and Zinoviev in 1915 ('Against the stream'), by breaking with the numerous majority of Social Democracy in Russia and worldwide, since it had once again shown its counter-revolutionary character.
- For example: The April Thesis imposed dictatorially on the Bolshevik parti, the majority of which followed a reformist and defensist viewpoint.
- For example: The fundamental question of necessary military preparation (the 'plot') organised secretly and against the great majority of the Bolshevik party which was already widely gangrenated by social pacifists and partisans of the constituent democracy (old Bolsheviks: Stalin, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Kalinin,...) and it was Trotsky who explained that at the heart of the Bolshevik party existed two principle tendencies:

"One of them was proletarian and led to the path of world revolution; the other was democratic, which is to say petit bourgeois, and led in the final analysis to the subordination of proletarian politics to the needs of the reforming of bourgeois society."

Trotsky - The Lessons of October

- For example: The dissolution imposed by force of bayonets, of the first and last sitting of the famous Constituent Assembly, democratically elected and bailed out once again by the majority of the Bolsheviks:

"The theoretical critique of democracy and bourgeois liberalism reaches the height of intensity, by the expulsion of this pack of democratically elected scoundrels who make up the Constituent Assembly as carried out by armed workers."

Bordiga - Lenin on the Path to Revolution

All these acts, which materialized more and more as the revolution -the defense of the historic interests of the proletariat- went on. They had to be imposed by force (as much military as exemplary), they had to be practically taken on by minorities which to all intents and purposes, never corresponded to existing formal parties. On the contrary, it is always very democratically and by very large majorities that counter-revolutionary positions and the rapid slide into the bourgeois swamp are imposed. To become convinced of this, it is enough to see that it is always more democratically that the bourgeois positions took precedence, throughout the congresses of the Communist International, so as to arrive at the very democratic and systematic unanimous vote inaugurated during the Stalin period itself, and especially when it was a matter of condemning with the right hand what the left hand had done.

"Stalin was able (...) to carry out his triumph by making democracy at the heart of the party function in full at the time of the struggles against the opposition in 1926/28."

Vercaci - "October"

And if the example is also taken of the "lost revolutions" in Germany during the period 1917-1923, on the essential role played by the antiquated democratic notions at the heart of the proletariat, the acts multiply. Those things which were presented as revolutionary positions as vanguard communist positions, principally born by R. Luxembourg and the Spartacus League, were nothing but a "bowing down" before the fetishism of the masses (and therefore of

democracy), nothing but a pale substitute for social democratism, lightly radicalised to suit the circumstances.

It was to follow the masses and their ideas that the Spartacus League refused to break with social-democracy. They entered and stood surety for the foundation of the USPD on the same positions as those of the SPD and with men such as Kautsky, Bernstein and Hilferding (3). Meanwhile, the real communist force organised in the heart of the ISD (Radical Internationalists of Germany) refused this entryism and accused even Luxembourg and Liebknecht of reiterating the "betrayal of 1914". To the necessary class split, the demarcation between the forces of revolution and those of counter-revolution, the centrist swamp replied: "The slogan isn't scission or unity, new party or old party, but reconquest of the party from below, by the revolt of the masses who must take into their hands the organisations and their instruments." (Quoted by Broué in "Revolution in Germany"). Faced to this return to social-democracy (had it ever been left!) by the Luxembourg group, the communists proclaimed: "The 'International' group is dead" (Arbeiterpolitik), and founded the IKD (International Communists of Germany) as the kernel of the future communist party.

In the same way, in each revolutionary phase, under the pretext of the "immaturity of the masses", Luxembourg and her successors Levi and Zetkin etc. were to oppose insurrection (the basis of the marxist conception of the destruction of the state) by the progressive conquest of the masses and of the state, dear to all social-democrats.

"It is from below that we must undermine the bourgeois state, in acting so that the public, legislative and administrative powers are no longer separated, but merged, and by placing them into the hands of the workers and soldiers councils."

Luxembourg - Speech to the founding Convention of the KPD

All the gradualism, administrationism, educationism,... "workers" derivations of reformist democracy, are contained in what was to become the Luxembourgist ideology: the conception of the conquest of the consciousness of the majority of the workers, of the workers' councils conceived as "the parliamentary of the proletarians of the towns and country" (Luxembourg, -Die Rote Fahne- 1918), of the "boss-less" factories,... basically of a new bourgeois soup dragging the proletariat towards massacres reiterated many times, refusing organisation for fear of the riposte that they would be cutting themselves off from the mythical masses.

From the occupation of the "Berliner Lokalanzeiger" by armed militants, condemned by Luxembourg, to the denunciation of the "March Action" by Levi, there is one same conciliatory line, that of the refusal of confrontation (always under the pretext that it would be tantamount to putshism), of the refusal of armed insurrection, of the refusal of communist revolution.

In the same way, in the most famous polemic between "mass and leaders", Luxembourg made herself one of the most ardent defenders of the masses against the leaders of the freedom of critique (cf. "Marxism against dictatorship"!!!). This pseudo contradiction between masses and leaders betraying the masses is a pure product of democracy and of its pathogenic functioning. It is, in effect, in democratic organisms (elective or not, federalist or centralist,...) that this type of problem can arise, for it presupposes both a

mass of untutored, amorphous and atomized individuals ready to be betrayed, and the exceptional individual, the leader who, at the end of a certain time, may betray or may not (for libertarians they betray by definition).

For we authoritarian marxists, the masses have only the leaders they deserve.

It wasn't the Noskes, the Scheidemanns, the Kautskys,... who betrayed the "good" social-democratic masses. It was precisely because these masses were social-democratic, impregnated by more than 20 years of class collaboration, pacifism, nationalism, democratism,... that Noske, Scheidemann and Kautsky were able to express clearly the original content, the substance of social democracy... i.e. bourgeois socialism. The 'betrayal' of the revolutionary program doesn't suddenly date from 1914, but goes back to the years around 1875 when there came together the Lassalians and the already barely revolutionary marxists (Bebel, Liebknecht,...) at Gotha to round the social democratic party of sinister reputation. At this stage the Lassalians were already well integrated into the Bismarckian state. The autonomisation of leaders (and therefore of bureaucracy) can only exist at the heart of organisations, parties, etc. where the only things which link individuals are some general humanist and well meaning ideas. This allows the democratically elected leaders (with all the cult of personality, careerism and the struggles between different sects or cliques which this implies) to carry on with bourgeois politics in the name of immediate or mythical good of 'their' poor masses. Whether this means of functioning is called federalism or democratic centralism, it is a matter each time of conferring powers of attorney on leaders who worshipped as much today as they will be denounced as traitors tomorrow (for example Kautsky, who defended essentially the same positions both before and after 1914!). These leaders are thereby empowered to say loudly what the masses are thinking at that immediate moment. Now the 'immediacy' of the masses, of the majority, can only be the immediate reality of their submission to capital, which is why the dominant ideas at the heart of the masses are the ideas of the dominant class, ideas which the "leaders" can only repeat. Bernstein didn't betray social democracy when he said that "the movement is all and the goal is nothing" he was only theorising the real practise of the German social democrats. Luxembourg in opposing Bernstein didn't struggle against the counter-revolutionary practice of social-democracy, she only struggled to maintain this practice in liaison with revolutionary ideas, with the "goal". This was in order to maintain a completely formal coherence between "reform and revolution", that is to say, in order to liquidate revolutionary preparation to the profit of immediate reforms.

For Luxembourg, the only preparation, the only domain where one could speak of revolution is that of pure ideas, of consciousness, of the "education of the masses":

"I think, on the contrary, that the only violence that will lead us to victory is the socialist education of the working class in the daily struggle."

Luxemburg - Discourse on Tactics, 1898

"Educationalism", the act of wanting to win over each proletarian individual intellectually to socialism, led Luxembourg into never understanding the revolutionary situation and the tasks it throws up, into always trying to procrastinate, to put a brake on the movement under the pretext that it wasn't yet massive enough, not "conscious" enough. And Luxembourg

"educationalism" only served to disarm the real proletarian fighters, in order to make of them parliamentary puppets and pacifists:

"Socialism, instead of making indomitable rebels from out of present conditions, would end up making docile sheep; domesticated and "cultivated" to be ready to be sheared, (...) We cannot therefore link the revolution to the education of the proletariat, because then the revolution would never come."

Avanti - The Problem of Culture. (Polemic at the heart of the PSI where the abstentionist left regrouped around Bordiga clearly defended anti-cultural and anti-educationalist positions.)

Contrary to the legend upheld as much by trotskyists as by councilists R.Luxembourg does not represent communism but on the contrary the multiple and despairing attempts to push back its preparation and its realization. It particularly cruelly represents the disintegration of the workers' movement by democratic poison, all the more so when the latter is classified as "workers". There is a class divide between the German communist left (whose real direct line is IKD-KAPD) and luxembourgism, the base on which the Levis, Radeks, Zetkins, Brandlers,... constructed the KPD, single issue fronts, and other politics of fatal remembrance (4).

For Luxembourg:

"It is not a question today of a choice between democracy and dictatorship. The question placed by history on us today is: bourgeois democracy or socialist democracy. For the dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy in the socialist sense of the term. The dictatorship of the proletariat doesn't mean bombs, putsches, riot, "anarchy", as the agents of capitalism dare to pretend, but for the edification of socialism, for the expropriation of the capitalist class conforming to the feelings and by the will of the revolutionary majority of the proletariat, and therefore in the spirit of socialist democracy. Without conscious will and without the conscious action of the proletariat, there is no socialism."

Rosa Luxemburg - Die Rote Fahne

For the revolutionary communists, there is a class divide between "worker" democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat and:

"We could reply that provided that the revolution sweeps away the heap of infamies accumulated by the bourgeois regime and provided that the formidable circle of institutions which oppress and mutilate the life of the productive masses is broken, it would not trouble us at all that blows would be struck home by men not yet conscious of the outcome of the struggle."

Bordiga - Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle 1946-48

Luxembourgism is just the liberal version of leninism (and later of stalinism) and it is not for nothing that it served as a caution to all humanist "anti-stalinist" democretins, from M.Pivert to Cohn-Bendit, from R.Lefevre to D.Guerin, from Sabatier to Mandel, without forgetting the "new" apologists, the ICC. More still than its leninist cousin, luxembourgism ideology inscribes itself in perfect continuation with the social democratic tradition which, under cover of the name of Marx, is nothing but a vulgar mixture of Proudhon and Lassalle. Lenin and above all Trotsky, despite a similar assimilation of the dictatorship of the proletariat to "workers" democracy, had at least tried to break with

democratic conceptions on trusting solely in the "saving virtue" of violence, terrorism and terror (5).

Luxembourism is thus one of the most representative ideologies of the myth of "workers" democracy, and of its fatal practice of complete abasement, of pacifist defeatism before the forces of the bourgeoisie. But it is not the only one. Let us cite too the austro-marxists who, with Max Adler and his theorisation of the system of workers' councils as the realization of "workers" democracy, find themselves very close to Luxembourg and Gramsci, but equally the whole of the currents demanding "workers' control", "self-management" which is in fact only the application of "workers" democracy to the economic sphere, that is to say the perpetuation of capitalist exploitation in the name of the proletariat (cf. Socialisme ou Barbarie, the IS,...). And here we are touching on a fundamental point: the liaison between "workers" democracy signifying "politically" the application of democratic parliamentary rules at the heart of the proletarian "mass" organs (assemblies, unions, councils,...) that is to say the submission of the proletarian tasks to the application of a majority, and therefore, most often, to bourgeois ideology; and "workers" democracy signifying "economically", the management by (atomized) proletarians of their own exploitation. In effect, "workers" (or "direct", for libertarians) democracy signifies in the first place the application of democratic rules (submission of the minority to the majority; one individual, one voice) at the heart of the proletarian organisms (as much those regrouping workers' masses as those distinctly revolutionary in membership). These organisms (especially the more passive one) are not, for the demo-cretins, based on a political content, on a program and a will to struggle, but, on the contrary, on vulgar sociological criteria, on the "economic" adherence of the individuals. ("A worker is someone who does such and such jobs or still more vulgarly, someone who earns..."). It is therefore a matter of an addition of "atomized worker" individuals, that is to say, of atoms of capital. At the heart of these assemblies thus constituted the democratic vote sanctions the addition of individual opinions and therefore sanctions the fact that ideology and dominant opinions, at the heart of these assemblies remain those of the ruling class i.e. of the bourgeoisie. To start from the isolated individual, sociologically a worker, from the addition of his particular opinions, is necessarily to arrive, not at a position of our class (denying the individual for the benefit of the collectivity in struggle) but to a sum of bourgeois positions.

"To start from individual unity (?) in order to draw social deductions and to construct the plans of society, or even in order to deny society, is to start from an unreal presupposition which, even in its most modern formulations, is basically only a modified reproduction of concepts of religious revelation, of creation, and of the spiritual life independent of the facts of natural and organic life."

Bordiga - The Democratic Principle, 1921

Workers' experience shows us that it is at the heart of these organisms (councils in Germany, Soviets in Russia, "unions" in the USA and Latin-America,...) that existing positions, confused or openly bourgeois, impose themselves most easily and often even maintain themselves after the victorious workers' insurrection. Let us rapidly give the example that it was the "bloody dog", but nevertheless "worker", Noske who was democratically elected to the head of the councils in Germany and that, in almost all proletarian centres, his SPD colleagues controlled the majority of the councils.

In the same way, in Russia, it was necessary to organize the insurrection on the eve of the congress of the Soviets so as to put the latter before the fait accompli! (cf. the polemic between Lenin and Trotsky).

The democratic principle opposes itself to (and never takes account of) workers' needs, to the necessities of the struggle, i.e. to the proletarian content which these assemblies could have if their constitution did not depend on the sociological and individual adherence of the proletarians but, on the contrary, on their will to struggle... The delimitation occurs through the struggle and the very reality of the classes' antagonisms demonstrates that it is most often minorities (an eminently relative term since these minorities become, in revolutionary period, millions of proletarians in struggle) who practically assume the revolutionary tasks and "make the revolution".

"Revolution is not a problem of organisational forms. Revolution is on the contrary a problem of content, a problem of movement and action of revolutionary forces in an unceasing process, which cannot be theorised by fixing it in various tentatives of unchangeable 'constitutional doctrine'."

Bordiga - The Democratic Principle, 1921

"Workers" democracy thus affirms itself as the last rampart of capital, the ultimate bourgeois solution to the crisis of capital, for it tends at each moment to make counter-revolutionary ideas at the heart of the proletariat come to the fore, and not the communist aspects; it takes on the task of making the vanguard sectors wait and therefore draw back under the pretext that other, more massive sectors are lagging behind. At each moment, "workers" democracy thus brings to the fore the heterogeneity of the proletariat produced by capital, to the detriment of the aspects of communist unification and homogenisation. Democracy thus directly opposes itself to the worldwide centralization of the proletariat, to its organic unity, to its constitution into a world party.

Complementarily to "workers" democracy applied in the political sphere, the workers having to decide what are their tasks, when they are historically determined, there is the "workers" democracy applied to the economical sphere in the shape of "workers' control", or more fashionably, of "self-management". And if the communists have always struggled against self-management, against apprenticeship by workers of capitalist management (dear to Proudhon, Sorel, Adler, Gramsci,...) at the heart of capitalism, remains for us to destroy their myth even after the victorious insurrection.

"We don't want the conviction to spread among the mass of workers that in developing the institution of councils it is possible to take possession of the enterprises and to eliminate the capitalists. That would be the most dangerous of illusions. The enterprise will be conquered by the working class - and not merely by its personnel, which would be a very small matter, and not very communist - only after the whole of the working class seizes political power. Without this conquest, illusions will be dispelled by royal guards, carabinieri (Italian Secret Police) etc..., i.e. by the mechanisms of oppression and force which the bourgeoisie has at its disposal, through its state apparatus."

Bordiga - The Lessons of Recent History

And as Bordiga perceived it, if before the insurrection the conquest of the factories by the workers can only be used to turn the latter from their destructive tasks to the profit of the "workers" reform of the system, even after the victorious insurrection, the conquest of the factories by the workers, "workers' control", self-management are not "very communist" measures which only reinforce ever-present bourgeois tendencies.

This politics comes in a direct line from two fundamental and complementary social democratic deviations: politicism and economism -managementism- which are in fact only the application of democracy in the revolutionary process. It would be a question of seeing the insurrection, the revolution as being primarily and uniquely a political act (Marx spoke of a revolution "with a political soul"): the taking by even a violent conquest of the political power, of the state apparatus, in fact "occupation" of the bourgeois state, then, as a function of the circumstances (else where always unfavourable!), the taking of such or such economical measures in the interest or not of the proletariat, with or without its consent (cf. the introduction of the Taylor system and of the 8 hour day since the beginning of the Bolshevik dictatorship). According to this conception, which is as much that of political mediation as is "workers" democracy, the communist revolution is no longer a social revolution having to completely destroy the bourgeois state and capitalist relations of production, having in the same process to destroy wage labour and transform production into the reproduction of human life; the "communist" revolution is nothing more than a change of political staff (same as in the bourgeois revolution), who get together to make some economic measures reforming the mode of production. Such is the real basis of the conception of "socialism in one country" which allows people to believe that "workers political power" can maintain itself thus (and for the USSR today we are talking of more than 60 years) on the basis of the capitalist system itself, and especially when reformed. From this, of course, the period of transition from capitalism to communism is no longer anything more than "the transitory mode of production", "workers democracy" in politics and "workers' management" in economy, the socialist mode of production (the soviets plus electrification) which would be a wise mixture of capitalism and... "workers" democracy whilst waiting for the final redemption. And of finding here all the "marxologist theoreticians" of the "socialist stage", of "state capitalism necessarily serving as a prelude to communism",... in fact, of vulgar apologists of the capitalist system in its soviet form, Russian or Chinese...

For us as for Marx, on the contrary, the period of transition is, and cannot be other than, the dictatorship of the proletariat for the abolition of wage labour, i.e. a whole process destroying the fundamental bases of the capitalist system (value, money, capital, wage labour) to immediately, in and by this same process, affirm more and more massively and consciously, human community, the human collective being. The period of transition can only be understood as a unitary process, a totalitarian movement of positive destruction/affirmation, destruction -negation- in so far as it dictatorially undermines the foundations of capitalism (extraction of surplus value based on the difference between necessary labour and surplus labour), affirmation -negation of the negation- for the more the process of destruction is generalised and therefore ceases to exist, the more fully will appear a new communal way of life, a communist way of life. Each endeavour which aims at separating in time or space the two terms -destruction and affirmation- of the process, of the transitory movement, inevitably ends up breaking it, returning in one way or another to wage slavery. That is evidently where politicism and economism end up, like all conception of

a "transitory means of production", i.e. a phase of "workers" democracy intermediate between capitalism and communism.

To replace or identify dictatorship of the proletariat with "workers" democracy, beyond the alteration of the terrorist character of the workers' dictatorship, signifies the perpetuation of political mediation, the perpetuation of capitalist social relationships -wage labour- self managed, democratically controlled by proletarians themselves. This is through denying the "semi-state" (Marx) character of the proletarian state, that is to say the process of extinction of the political sphere and the extension of human community. Such a self managed society is the realized utopia of capitalism, a world whose motor remains that of value valorizing itself -capitalism- but having evacuated from it the revolutionary, destroying side -the proletariat- in order to only maintain the reproductive pole of capital. "Workers" democracy thus expresses most fully the dream of all reformers of the world: capital without its contradictions, "present society purged of the element which revolutionize and dissolve it" (Marx - Bourgeois Socialism - The Communist Manifesto). As Barrot rightly said:

"Democracy served to harmonise the divergent interests in the framework of the bourgeois state. Now, communism knows no state, it destroys it; and nor does it know opposing social groups. It thus automatically dispenses with every mechanism of mediation which would decide what it would be fitting to do. To want communism and democracy is a contradiction. Since it is the end of politics and the unification of humanity it installs no power above society in order to make it stable and harmonious."

Barrot - Le Mouvement Communiste (Editions Champ Libre)

The paradox between communism and democracy is only the expression of that between the revolutionary proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The immense weight that social democratic and libertarian tradition weighs on the communist movement has for a long time induced the proletariat to conquer the bourgeois state, pacifically or not, to occupy it, to reform it; that to the rot of the bourgeois democracy, it was necessary to oppose the purity of "workers" democracy, briefly, that to all the bad capitalists, it was necessary to oppose and realize its benefits, the benefits of democracy -democracy as the positive pole of capital.

Against all these returns to bourgeois socialism, revolutionary marxism is always demarcated by the need to destroy capital social relations, the totality of the system.

- It is not a question of defending the labour pole against that of capital.
- It is not a question of liquidating the "wicked" capitalists in order to use the "good" productive forces.
- It is not a question of criticizing the barbaric bourgeois democracy to the benefit of civilizing "workers" democracy.

What interests us is the destruction of the entire system whose positive poles - democracy, progress, civilisation, sciences,...- only exist as function of and thanks to the negative poles -white terror, war, famine, pollution,...

"We marxists have our theoretical papers perfectly in order on this point: To the devil with freedom! To the devil with the State!"

Notes

1. We refer the reader interested by this question to Marx's classics (above all: "On the Jewish Question") as well as to Bordiga's work (especially: "The democratic Principle") -of which we can send you an english copy- continued by the Communist Left from Italy in exile, i.e. Bilan, Octobre, Prometheo and more recently by Camatte and the review Invariance (first series). As for ourselves, we have written and republished a serie of texts on this question:

- "Fasciste ou anti-fasciste, la dictature du capital c'est la démocratie" - in Le Communiste No.9.
- ["Against the myth of democratic rights and liberties"](#) - in Communism No.8.
- "L'Etat démocratique" (Bilan No.12) - Le Communiste No.12.
- "La dictature du prolétariat et la question de la violence" (Octobre No.5) - in Le Communiste No.17.

2. The reader is referred to the text "Quelques leçons d'octobre" in Le Communiste No.10/11 (in french).

3. The USPD or "Independent Social Democratic Party" so called "majoritary", which on the basis of the same program -the old Gotha Program- wanted to give back to social-democracy a virginity, which the 3 and 1/2 years of imperialist war relentlessly defended by the SPD, had disintegrated, to say the least. The entry of the spartacists into the heart of the USPD entailed the impossibility of the constitution of a force on communist base. A good many spartacists were rejoining the positions of the ISD (which materialised later, in 1918) and by the time of the founding of the KPD (S) it was anti-democratic, anti-union and anti-parliamentary tendencies which dominated the formal centrist leadership (Luxembourg, Levi, Jogishes, Dunker,...).

On this question we refer the reader to Authier and Barrot's book: "The Communist Left in Germany", as well as to our text "The KAPD in revolutionary action", in Le Communiste No.7.

4. as the text said, the IKD's were founded to oppose the Spartacus Leagues' social democratism, indicating by the name "communist" the class split with the social democrats of every shade. The VKPD -Unified Communist Party of Germany- was constituted in 1920, after the exclusion of the majority of the KPD(S) -a merger against the nature of the IKD's and Spartacus League- thanks to the manoeuvrings of Levi and Zetkin, thus excluding the "leftists", that is to say all truly revolutionary tendencies. It was in the wake of this exclusion that the KAPD -German Communist Workers Party- was to constitute itself in 1920 which was to prolong the inheritance of the ISD's and IKD's. The remnants of the KPD(S), in fact essentially the staff and the leadership, were to fuse with the "masses" of the USPD so as to form the VKPD, a mass centrist party, if not squarely bourgeois.

5. We have already on different occasions, indicated that if for us the use of violence, terrorism and terror are class methods, and as such, part of the communist program, violence and terror never in themselves constitute a class demarcation. Terror and terrorism are indispensable but insufficient. Contrary to Lenin and Trotsky who, in believing that terror was the essential delimitation, ended up massacring and putting down the revolutionary proletariat (strikes of 1921-23, Kronstat,...) we defend these methods of workers' struggle when

they are put into action in the historic interests of the proletariat. In this sense, they are "subsidiary", that is to say determined by the class that uses them. On this question we refer the reader to our text "Critique du réformisme armé" in Le Communiste No.17 and No.19.

"(The communists) propose to unmask in advance the insidious game of democracy, and to begin their attack against social democracy without waiting for its counter-revolutionary function to be revealed with a flash in actual fact."