Amadeo Bordiga

Lessons of the

Counterrevolutions
Introduction to the 1981 Spanish Translation

The theme of the general meeting of the Party held on September 1, 1951 in Naples was “the lessons of the counterrevolutions”, not only in order to respond to doubts and uncertainties of the comrades concerning the correct evaluation of the nature of the Russian economy and its historical development, but also to reestablish the fundamental criteria that, according to Marxism, define the major historical modes of production and the trajectory—one that is not always linear or without pauses and retreats—by which one mode of production passes away and yields to another.

As always, this meeting, faced with the tragic epilogue of the glorious Bolshevik revolution, set itself the task of reaffirming the integrity of the Marxist doctrine that excludes the existence of “other” types of relations of production between the capitalist and communist forms and the corresponding entry onto the stage of history of a “new” class or “parasitic caste” (in this case, the bureaucracy). It was also devoted to explaining just what objective and international conditions caused the Russian revolution, which was born in the combination of two revolutions (the anti-feudal and the anti-bourgeois
revolutions), to be unable to surpass, despite the resplendent proletarian and communist political victory of October, the bourgeois economic and social framework, which is by no means negated by the nationalization of industry.

This is by no means intended to detract from the revolutionary outcome with regard to the anti-feudal dimension of this great event, but it does allow for the clear depiction of the dramatic reality of the counterrevolution that is conventionally named after Stalin, in which the traditional aspect of the frontal clash between two classes was lacking in Russia (a historical fact that is not at all unprecedented); and in which, due to the lack of aid from the revolution in Europe, the destruction, even in a physical sense, of the world party of the class took place, with long-term effects that would be very hard to rectify.

The proletarian and communist nature of the October revolution had to and must be sought in the nature of its political leadership, in the exercise of the dictatorship on the part of the Bolshevik party that operated as an aspect of the world revolution and, on the domestic front, of the civil war against the vanquished bourgeoisie that was nonetheless sustained in its desperate attempts to survive and to reconquer its old position by the
international bourgeoisie, and against the remnants of Czarist feudalism as well. It would be vain to seek its nature in the economic measures which in the years of splendor could be legitimately defined as “socialist” in a dual sense: in particular sectors, due to the demands imposed by and the mere duration of the civil war, they possessed an anti-mercantile character; in other sectors, they subjected big industry and large-scale commerce to the direct control and management of a state that tended to use them for the ends and in the interests of the victory of the proletarian class in all countries. With regard to their real content, however, they were incapable, without the international victory of the proletarian class, of departing from the limits of a capitalism that tended towards the extreme limit of state capitalism, which had to overcome, over the expanse of huge geographical areas of the immense Russian territory not just pre-capitalist economic forms, but directly patriarchal and “natural” forms.

There can be no doubt that the text published below comprises only a partial treatment of the vast and complicated question of The Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today, as similar texts of the Party would also do later, such as the “Dialogue with Stalin”, the “Dialogato coi morti”, “Russia and Revolution in
Marxist Theory” and “Balance Sheet of a Revolution”. It may also contain formulas that are susceptible to engendering mistaken beliefs, which would later be corrected and that we have attempted to clarify with some notes. It is essential, however, not only for the deeper theoretical analysis of the various historical types of the counterrevolution, but also for the precise synthesis of the distinctive traits of the feudal, bourgeois and communist modes of production, a synthesis that is of vital importance in order to destroy the infamous Stalinist lie that calls capitalist industrialization under the aegis of the state “socialist”, and that tries to utilize the latter fraud to develop a theoretical justification for the supreme blasphemy of the “construction of socialism in one country”.

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Summary

1

Neither the appearance of forms of the dictatorship of capital nor the dissolution of the international communist movement and the complete degeneration of the Russian revolution are “surprises of history”, whose explanation would require the modification of the classical theoretical postulates of Marxism.

2

Those who directly attack Marxism as a theory of history are preferable to its “revisers” and “enrichers”, who are all the more harmful insofar as they avail themselves not of a collaborationist, but of an extremist phraseology. According to the latter, critical emendations and additions are necessary in order to correct what they call the failures and shortcomings of Marxism. We are now in a period of evident social and political counterrevolution;
but at the same time, it is a period of full confirmation and victory of our critique.

3

The analysis of the counterrevolution in Russia and its reduction to formulas will not be a crucial problem for the strategy of the proletarian movement in the new revolutionary upsurge which we expect, since it was not the first counterrevolution that ever took place; Marxism has experienced and studied a whole series of counterrevolutions. On the other hand, opportunism and the betrayal of the revolutionary strategy have followed a different course from that of the involution of the Russian economic forms.

4

Not only the study of the bourgeois counterrevolutions of the past, but also that of the feudal counterrevolutions directed against the insurrectionary bourgeoisie, lead to the determination of different historical types: total defeat, military and social at the same time (the peasant war in Germany of 1525); total military victory, but an involution and degeneration of the social foundations of the victors (destruction of
Italian capitalism despite the victory of the associated Communes over the feudal Empire at Legnano).

5

In order to classify the type of counterrevolution presented by the Russian case, in which, on the surface, its invasion by the capitalist powers failed and resulted in their military defeat, one must examine the economic fabric of Russia and its evolution that “tends” towards capitalism in a dual sense, politically and economically, without totally attaining this goal and without surpassing (since it was only in the cities that this was achieved) the stage that has been correctly called “state industrialism”.

6

In order to carry out this examination, it is necessary to reestablish some basic Marxist concepts: a) the definition of feudalism as the economy of multiple subdivided parcels and non-mercantile exchange; b) the definition of capitalism as the economy of mass production and integral mercantile exchange; c) the definition of socialism as the economy of mass production and non-mercantile distribution; a rationed but no longer
monetary form of distribution in the lower stage, and unlimited distribution in the higher stage.

The class struggle in the capitalist stage is not the struggle for the simple reduction of the total quantity of surplus value, but for the social conquest and control over the entire product which has been violently expropriated from the individual workers. The working class fights to conquer all of what today forms the wealth and the value of the productive apparatus and of the masses of commodities: constant capital, that is, the legacy of the labor of past generations that was usurped by the bourgeoisie; variable capital, that is, the labor of current generations, exploited for the most part by the bourgeoisie; surplus value, which must be reserved for the future generations in order to preserve and expand the productive apparatus, which is today monopolized by the bourgeoisie. These three factors are continually being degraded by capitalist anarchy.
State capitalism is not a new form of economy nor is it a transitional form between capitalism and socialism: it is pure capitalism, and appeared along with all the other forms of monopoly in the period of the victory of the bourgeoisie over the feudal powers. On the other hand, the capital-state relation lies at the basis of the bourgeois economy in all of its stages.

The Marxist view of history would collapse if, instead of recognizing a single type of capitalist relations of production that spans the entire period between revolutions in the mode of production, it were to admit different successive types in this period. And this applies to all the other preceding modes of production, too.

Like the German revolution of 1848, the Russian revolution had to integrate two revolutions: the anti-feudal and the anti-bourgeois revolutions. In its political and armed struggle, the German revolution failed to
attain either objective, but socially the anti-feudal revolution was successful, that is, that of the transition to capitalist forms. The Russian revolution was victorious politically and militarily in both its anti-feudal and anti-bourgeois revolutions and for this reason went much further. But on the economic and social planes it remained at the same level as the German revolution, limiting itself to encouraging the capitalist industrialization of the territory that it controlled.

11

In the wake of the great political victory, only a few sectors of socialist economy arose and, after the era of Lenin with the NEP, they had to be renounced in the absence of the international revolution. With Stalinism, the international revolution was repudiated, and the transition to large-scale industrialization was intensified, both in Russia proper as well as in Asia. Proletarian elements on the one side, and feudal on the other, tended to gravitate towards capitalism.
All of this arises from an analysis of the Soviet economy conducted on the basis of the criteria established above. The perspective of a third world war is not a central problem for the new revolutionary movement, either. In view of the convergence of the two anti-fascist crusades (against which the revolutionary proletarian nuclei stood fast as irreconcilable enemies), the west in the democratic sense and the east in the false proletarian sense, the situation during the war was counterrevolutionary. And it will be equally counterrevolutionary, for a certain period, before a new war, should Russia and the Atlantic powers reach an agreement on economic and territorial issues. And should a new war break out, the methods of colonial subjugation of the defeated country will assure a counterrevolutionary equilibrium in the post-war period insofar as the more advanced and historically more consolidated imperialism will emerge victorious. Just as the worst possible outcome of the First World War was the victory of England and that of the Second World War that of the Anglo-American alliance, an American victory will be the worst possible outcome in the third world war.
In the report presented in Rome at the meeting of the Party held on April 1, 1951, which is now entitled “Theory and Action in Marxist Doctrine” (see, in particular, the section entitled, “The Reversal of Praxis in Marxist Theory”, and Graphs I and II of the Appendix in the pamphlet, *Party and Class*, Ed. Programme Communiste, Paris, 1974), the Marxist concepts were reestablished against multiple intellectualizing constructions that claimed that an ascendant phase of capitalism must follow a declining phase. The perspective expounded by Marx is not that of an ascent followed by a decline of capitalism, but that of transient peaks alternating dialectically with violent oscillations and periodic ruptures of the mass of productive forces that capitalism itself controls, of its unlimited accumulation and concentration and, at the same time, of the antagonistic relation constituted by one of the dominated forces, the proletarian class. In other words, the productive potential continues to expand until equilibrium is shattered and an explosive revolutionary phase opens up during the course of
which, during a very brief period of sudden collapse, the old forms of production are destroyed and the forces of production are decimated in order to establish a new basis and a return to an even more powerful ascending phase.

It was shown that, in the opposed view postulating a shallow sine wave in which a phase of gradual ascent is followed by a phase of gradual descent, at the bottom of which the fatal death crisis of capitalism and the almost automatic transition to the power of the proletarian class take place, two errors are contained: gradualism and fatalism. And since the correct interpretation of historical development postulates, as a decisive factor of the phase of violent rupture of the capitalist dynamic, the intervention of revolutionary action, the process was illustrated by means of which, on the one hand, the basic physiological impulses of individuals, the workers and, therefore, of the class, are bound to economic interests, to action and only afterwards to consciousness, leading and flowing towards the party; on the other hand, only the party can “invest praxis with meaning” and only in the party, within certain limits, is it possible for consciousness to proceed to action.

In this way, the objective and subjective factors of the revolutionary explosion that is maturing within the new
and tempestuous rise of the capitalist economy are properly situated on the theoretical plane, after the declining phase of the drastically unfavorable conditions of the second imperialist war and the parallel victory of the “Stalinist” counterrevolution.

2

After the Rome Meeting, in order to respond to the issue of the splits in Stalinism in Italy and France, the need was felt to recapitulate, in an “Appeal for the International Reorganization of the Marxist Revolutionary Movement” 1, the essential positions upon which an international regroupment of the groups constituted on the basis of revolutionary Marxism may be conceived, positions that are in distinct contrast with those of the schismatic groups which, in more than one instance, are a direct or indirect emanation of the bastion of imperialism: the United States of America.

3

Two critical observations were made concerning the proposal for this manifesto, which by its very nature cannot be of a personal order:
1. The first affirmation of paragraph 5 of the “summary” that precedes the present detailed report was considered to be insufficient, in which it is declared that in Russia “the social economy is tending towards capitalism”;

2. It was not accepted that American imperialism should be defined as the fundamental force of the counterrevolution, or at least the affirmation that its unlikely defeat should be considered to be objectively preferable in the next war.

4

As we said at the Naples Meeting of April 1, 1951, in response to these criticisms, we cannot restrict ourselves to the narrow limits in which they are proposed: it is necessary to address these criticisms within the broader framework of the problem of the examination of the current counterrevolutionary process. This leads us to once again properly pose some fundamental positions of Marxism applied to particularly significant periods of counterrevolution, which relate not only to the proletarian class, but also to the bourgeois class and the phase of the latter’s original constitution as a ruling class.
Above all, we must react energetically to the fact that the critiques that are made of Stalinism do not result in a crystallization of firmly consolidated energies around the fundamental theses of Marxism, but in a deplorable confusion concerning the principles that must nonetheless be considered as definitively established.

A detestable example of this is the charlatanry concerning a third force or a third class—the “bureaucracy”, the “technocrats”—to which we must respond that Marxism must be accepted or rejected as a whole: it does not need our amendments or repairs, which comprise the worst of the deformations of the revolutionary theory.

The greatest caution is necessary when addressing the Russian problem. While it is true that the work that has been carried out on the basis of the development of the class struggle allows the fundamental formulations of Marxism to confront the new forms of the class struggle, it is also true that in order to achieve this result—which some might consider to be too modest or insignificant—
it is necessary to oppose the mania which has seized too many groups and militants and which consists in wanting to find the key to problems uprooted from their general context and in believing that it has been found in a phrase or, worse yet, in a prescription. We shall repeat once more that this is not just applicable, in this case, to the Russian problem, but to a much broader and general field of inquiries: that of the counterrevolution.

7

The facts have shown that rather than the University where we presumed to find ourselves in order to address the major problems concerning what is taking place in Russia, we must return to high school, or even to elementary school, in order to reestablish the concepts of capitalism and even of feudalism, for otherwise it is not possible to correctly understand the former except in relation to the latter.

8

It is false, and therefore incorrect, to think that the problem of “what has occurred and what is occurring in Russia” can be encompassed by the alternative: capitalism or socialism, or in that other alternative that
proposes the “remedy” of the third force or the third “class”. It is true that the criticism directed at the expression, “tends towards capitalism” requires that this expression be made more precise with regard to where this tendency is heading; but it must not lead us to become mired in the Russian problem, but to the contrary to situate this problem in the general context of the examination of the counterrevolution.

Marxism is not the doctrine for the understanding of revolutions, but of counterrevolutions: everyone knows how to orient themselves at the moment of victory, but few are those who know what to do when defeat arrives, becomes complicated and persists.

What proves that the Russian problem cannot be reduced to its own boundaries is the fact that although Stalin is situated to the left of Lenin in the economic domain and in the domains of the measures to be adopted in Russia, he is situated to the right of Lenin in the domains of domestic and especially international politics. Lenin himself had considered permitting the entry of foreign capital in Russia by way of concessions, but never proposed an alliance with the capitalist states,
which is what Stalin did in 1939 with Germany, and in 1941 with England and later with the United States. The two courses, the economic and the political, do not coincide.

Types of Counterrevolutions

10

A first type of counterrevolutionary victory is the one in which military and political defeat, far from determining the extinction, instead accompanies the victorious progress of the revolutionary class in the social and economic domains. England, which was already a capitalist country, entered into an alliance with the feudal powers and defeated Napoleon, but by way of the Restoration of 1815 assisted in the consolidation of the bourgeois class in France. The defeats of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848 evoke the further development rather than the cessation of the advance of the capitalist class.
A second type is the one in which the military and social defeat of the bourgeoisie coincide. The peasant war of 1525 in Germany, analyzed by Engels, shows the betrayal by the bourgeoisie of the cities who abandoned the peasants to reprisals and repression, which resulted in a political and social victory for feudalism, which would retain power for another three centuries, thus reinforcing the social form of glebe serfdom.

A third type is the one in which, although not as a result of the force of arms or a political defeat, the bourgeois class is dealt a setback on the economic and social planes. In some ways, the fall of the medieval Communes can be related to the fall of the Russian revolution. Marx saw the Communes, in Italy and in Flanders, as the first affirmation of the bourgeois class. In central and northern Italy, the Communes were highly developed and also responded so well to the possibilities offered to this primitive bourgeoisie that neither the petty local lords nor the armies of France and Germany could defeat them militarily. Their fall was determined by the
discovery, at the end of the 15th century, of new trade routes and by the contemporary shift of the center of economic life.

13

These three different types of historical counterrevolutionary development show, on the one hand, the impossibility of connecting in a purely formal manner the economic and the political processes; and, on the other hand, the great complexity of this essential problem of counterrevolutions. We have to explain not the alleged Russian enigma, but why, after the second imperialist war, we have not witnessed a proletarian revolutionary wave, but rather the further development of the counterrevolution. We must examine the behavior of the bourgeoisie, the policies of Stalinism, and above all we must base our examination on the fact that capitalism, having learned from the example of the period following the first world war (when the revolutionary explosion took place in the countries that were militarily defeated), occupied and maintained their occupations of the defeated countries at the conclusion of the second world war. This is the examination that must be undertaken; the vacillations about the questions
of principle linked to the trade union problem prove to us that we must pay close attention to it.

14

As far as the proletarian class is concerned, we have first of all the defeat of Babeuf in 1796; later, that of Paris and Lyon in 1831, which was followed by the founding of the Communist League (1836-1847); the defeat of 1848 which was followed by the founding of the First International (1864); the strangling of the Paris Commune (1871), which was followed by the constitution of the Second International (1889); the collapse of the Second International in 1914, which was followed by the victory of 1917; and, finally, the victory of the counterrevolution in 1928.

15

After these historical references it is necessary to proceed to the restoration of some of the fundamental positions of the Marxist doctrine. It is necessary not to pose as essential the problem of analysis of situations or of perspectives, as if the proletariat has been deprived of these for a century. The Rome Meeting of April 1, 1951 established on this solid and illustrious foundation the
reality of the historical process that determines the revolutionary clash and the fundamental concepts of the development of the social struggle. Although we admit that this struggle assumes new aspects in the phase of capitalist totalitarianism, in which the bourgeois state founds trade unions, we do not deduce from this the invalidity, but the confirmation of the principles of Marxism even on this terrain, and our focus on current problems is based on the current, temporary victory of the counterrevolution. The Rome Meeting also called attention to the distinctive character of our current which, although anti-parliamentarian, was far from being anti-trade union and advocated the most extensive and systematic labor in the trade unions. Finally, the meeting concluded that a pre-revolutionary phase is inconceivable without a struggle by the proletarian class for its economic interests, without organizations that include broad sectors of workers, without a class party that includes a minority of the proletariat but influences the whole proletariat and is based on economic determinations and on the trade union organizations.
This text responds to the demand for a more complete explanation of the concepts of Marxism which, once again, and as a result of the difficulty of assimilating them that has been exhibited even among the ranks of our organization, are summoned onto the scene by ideological confusion and the threat of the appearance of deviations. The core of the question is whether, although three phases exist in the capitalist epoch (the revolutionary, the peaceful and the totalitarian), there is nonetheless a single criterion of interpretation and a single type of capitalism by means of which the latter is victorious, develops and will finally collapse. We must not forget that reformism emerged precisely on the basis of the affirmation and with the claim of proving that nothing is fixed, that everything undergoes transformation in a molecular way, that the capitalism of 1895 was no longer the capitalism of 1789. Marxism responded, and still responds, that moments of crisis effectively exist, but that they do not lead to the emergence of diverse types of capitalism. History is the history of the types of forms of production; and, in each such form, with the growth of the forces of production, the resistance of the forms of production also grows, and
so too does the thickness of the cauldron containing these forms. Capitalism is constant and not flexible; it neither adapts nor lags behind; but, finally, it wrecks and destroys itself.

17

There are phases but not types of capitalism, although the real mechanism of society is not characterized by a pure type in time (that is, one that is extended immediately throughout the entire world) and in space (that is, one that automatically eliminates all the pre-existing and defeated classes within each country), but is characterized instead by a mixed fabric of diverse forms of production. Engels even said that in certain historical circumstances it would even be difficult to identify the class that really wields state power. In England, for example, a highly developed capitalist country, not only do numerous forms of artisanal production coexist, but there are even pre-feudal forms of production in Scotland. The same is true of the United States, where the industrial East coexists with the preponderantly agricultural West.
In order to explain the three phases of the capitalist epoch (the revolutionary phase, the phase of its consolidation and the phase of its defensive battle against the threat of the proletarian revolution), it is not necessary to present the fashionable models that are utilized by the bourgeoisie to dispel the prospect of revolutionary overthrow into a distant past. The same definition of capitalism explains Cromwell in 1652, 1789, 1848 and Stalin himself. Therefore, it is necessary to establish first of all the distinctive and essential characteristics of the capitalist-bourgeois type of relations of production, in order to then see the different forms in which the social structure of the various countries of the world are manifested and the diverse relations of influence and of struggle with the modes of production that preceded it and will follow it. Above all, the diverse essential historical relations are the ones that enable us to speak of different phases: the bourgeois revolutionary phase, in which the struggle is waged against feudal forms and in which the political alliance with the new working class, the Fourth Estate, is total; the intermediate phase, in which capitalism appears to accept the just legal demands of the workers; and the
counterrevolutionary phase, in which all the forces of capitalism are mobilized to prevent the proletariat from politically and socially destroying it.

In order to understand what happens when a proletarian attempt to conquer power is defeated, it is not enough to trace the play of forces and the actions of the political, police or military organizations; it is necessary to depict the historical types of the social economy that are present in the framework of the country in question, and to ask oneself which ones are advancing and which ones are not.

Thus, before attempting to decipher the counterrevolution in Russia, it is necessary to reaffirm the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist type of production, returning to the foundations of the fundamental Marxist texts. But this is not enough: we will have to highlight the character of the classical pre-capitalism of the feudal regime. It is to this task that we shall devote the concepts elaborated in the course of this exposition (sections 19 to 38).
From Feudalism to Capitalism

19

More than once, in the texts of the Left, we have distinguished three successive phases of the capitalist epoch: the revolutionary phase, the peaceful phase, and the “totalitarian” phase.

20

This concept must be clarified and rendered concordant with the essential thesis of Marxism: capitalism is always one, from its birth to its death.

21

The antagonism between the evolutionist theory and our revolutionary theory consists in the following: for the former, every historical type of society is gradually modified until it is imperceptibly transformed into another different type of society; for the latter, any particular type of relation of production arises from a revolutionary explosion provoked by a high degree of tension in the productive forces, and this type subsists
until the ensuing explosion where it is destroyed by the new forces of production which it has created.

22

Thus, once the antagonism between the feudal, pre-capitalist system of relations of production and the bourgeois system has become clearly evident, the same characteristics define the entire historical period that unfolds until the point is reached where the antagonism between the bourgeois relations of production and socialist society is also clearly evident: there are no sub-species of the bourgeois or capitalist social type.

23

In order to correctly understand this statement one must not forget that if the bourgeois revolution now tends to be contemporaneous throughout the entire world, and if the proletarian revolution tends to be contemporaneous in a much more distinctive manner, there are nonetheless very different situations in different parts of the inhabited world.
Obviously, in the examination of these situations it is necessary to keep in mind:

1. The coexistence in the same country of different fundamental types of productive technologies (glebe serfdom, small-scale freeholders’ agriculture, free artisans, collective industry and services);
2. The coexistence of different social classes (which always number more than the two protagonist classes of the ongoing historical transition);
3. The political relation of forces with respect to the class that is most heavily armed, which is more autonomous and which subjugates the others.

When one examines the historical course of the capitalist epoch in individual countries, groups of countries or continents, one undoubtedly recognizes the more or less complicated succession not only of different relations of force (even before the extension and contraction of the corresponding sectors of the diverse productive types), but also a series of advances and retreats on both the social as well as political terrains of the same class in the
struggle to impose its own type of relations of production.

26

In the successive historical periods of the bourgeoisie rule, such as, for example, in France, England, Europe, etc., there is therefore a series of differences with regard to the spread of industrialism, with regard to the resistance and the liquidation of the old feudal class, with regard to the formation of the great territorial nation-states, and with regard to the resistance mobilized against the threat posed by the appearance of the revolutionary proletariat.

27

It is therefore a fundamental problem for the theory, the organization and the strategy of the proletarian revolutionary party to completely understand all these aspects, all these circumstances and their innumerable combinations in different places and successive eras.
However, in accordance with its view of history and of the determinism of collective action, the proletarian party proposes the same terms, throughout its whole cycle, for the definition of the characteristics of capitalist society, its condemnation and its abolition.

Among the social and political distinctions of the successive phases, it is also important to take into account the ideological arsenal of the bourgeois class, which it has made use of since the beginning of its revolutionary struggle and whose employment reflects the successive changes that derive from the fact that the bourgeoisie became an autonomous, ruling and ultimately a counterrevolutionary class.

The definition of the characteristics of capitalism is complete and definitive since the times of the “Manifesto of the Communist Party” and since the writings that already precisely contained the economic
doctrine elaborated in *Capital*. Without neglecting the evaluation of all the contemporary and future differences of historical development, the Marxist economic analysis examines the laws of capitalist production as they arose from the hypotheses of the bourgeois enemy itself: full equality of every citizen on the field of rights; full and equal opportunity for all to participate in exchange on the market. With this analysis, Marx shows once and for all and irrevocably that the predominance of this system by no means signifies the advent of a phase of equilibrium in which humanity would settle down in comfort, but that it constitutes the rise to power of a specific ruling class against which revolutionary conflicts and crises would arise. The capitalist form of production has never been and never will be capable of evincing unforeseen characteristics different from those of the initial Marxist definition. If such a type of capitalist production were to be experimentally verified, then Marxism as a science of history would have to be rejected in its entirety.2

Some pre-capitalist economies have exhibited concentrations of masses of productive forces: men, draft animals, tools, provisions, vast tracts of land. In
general, these masses of productive forces were privately owned and were limited to men (slaves) and land (ancient Rome), but never embraced all tools, even primitive ones. Quite frequently, masses of productive forces were subject to state or military powers: nobles, military chiefs, kings, republics, and sometimes theocracies.

32

The immediately pre-capitalist type of production is the feudal type. In the light of our reminder that no type is present only in a certain time or place, we shall define the feudal type as that of the extensive division of ownership and control of all the productive forces and of the absence of their mass concentration. In agriculture, apart from virgin lands, hunting preserves and similar estate lands, one finds the small farm granted to the serf family. Each serf disposes of the products of his little plot of land, but owes a part of these products or a part of his labor time to the feudal lord, to whom he is subject by a veritable division of labor: the serf cannot leave his farm; the lord, in turn, defends the territory and its inhabitants against marauding enemies. It is a personal form of dependence. There are also peasants who farm their little plots of land and who have complete disposal over
their entire product, and artisans who are the owners of their workshops. The worker on these small parcels, who comprises the basic human productive force, controls the elements of the other productive forces—land, raw materials, tools—and likewise controls his portion of the products that he consumes or exchanges on his own behalf.

33

Up until this point, although money can already constitute capital, under the two forms of commercial and bank capital, it can be affirmed from the Marxist point of view that money is not one of the productive forces, but only an intermediary of exchange. In the pure feudal type it is prohibited to buy and sell land or masses of instruments of labor, just as it is prohibited to employ wage workers.

34

We recall these well-known facts in order to be able to define the characteristics of capitalism: with money one can buy land in any form; with money, individuals can buy masses of instruments and machines as they are invented and, in the same way, masses of raw materials
or semi-finished products. Finally, masses of labor power or of labor time can be bought with money. In order for this to be possible, it is necessary for the workers to be free and therefore for the feudal lords to be dispossessed of their privileges; for the small-scale peasant farmers to be dispossessed of their lands and chattels; and for the artisans to be dispossessed of their workshops, of the instruments of labor and raw materials. In these conditions, money becomes a productive force because it can assume not just the form of commercial or bank capital, but that of real estate or industrial capital, depending on whether it is invested in land, buildings, tools, machinery, etc.

35

In the feudal type, the possession of productive forces is only possible on a small scale, since the feudal privilege is a personal right and not a real right over the physical man (as in the case of slavery) or over things and land (as in Roman law). The definition of capitalism as a system of private property in the means of production and land is therefore perfectly acceptable; more precisely, capitalism is the system of unlimited property in opposition to divided, small-scale property.
The essential historical fact, however, consists in the battle over the mass of products. Once the workers were expropriated of their little plots of land, the products, henceforth concentrated in the form of masses of commodities, are at the disposal of the bourgeois class that possesses the monopoly of the land and of capital (appropriation of both the means of production as well as the products by the bourgeoisie).

Bourgeois economic theory maintains that, once the barriers of the feudal estate systems erected on the basis of birthright or investiture were destroyed, and once everyone could aspire in principle to be owners of land or of capital, a full equilibrium in the potential distribution of wealth among all those who collaborated in production would be established. The Physiocrats, who defended feudalism (although in its modern form), maintained that the land was the source of wealth. The Mercantilists maintained that the source of wealth was the exchange of commodities. The Economists of the bourgeoisie maintained that labor was the source of
wealth, and that commodities neither increase nor decrease in value in exchange, while in production, industrial or agricultural, all intervention of labor that transforms commodities adds value to them; furthermore, they claimed that a perfect exchange between equivalent values and between free and equal contracting parties takes place when the wage laborer receives money for his work.

The refutation of this theory is found in the Marxist theory of surplus value. This shows that when he exchanged his product on the market, the small-scale worker-owner of the feudal past extracted from this exchange all the value that he had added to his product through his labor, while, to the contrary, in the capitalist regime the wage laborer extracts from his labor only part of the value that his labor had added to the product. It also shows that this phenomenon is inevitable on the scale of society as a whole since the former worker-owner of the feudal era was violently dispossessed of his tools and, essentially, of his right to dispose of part of his products. To this initial expropriation was added an indefinite and always violent series of expropriations from the moment when the law prohibited the wage
worker from seizing a part of his products, however small it might be.

From Capitalism to Socialism

The first form in which the bourgeois economy was affirmed during the epoch of feudal power was state capitalism. And this is also the form it currently assumes when the threat of proletarian revolution arises.

As we have pointed out on other occasions, contrary to the current version that seeks to convince us that the capitalists are being subjugated by the state, it is capitalism that increasingly subjects the state to its class interests. The bourgeoisie possesses in the state the organ of power by means of which it imposes its solutions by force. This state nourishes with its many breasts the various capitalist enterprises while it sucks the labor and the blood of the poor, which is a trait that is common to both the United States and Russia, while the much lower standard of living of the workers in the latter country informs us that it is there where this process has reached the highest degree of tension. But this is also manifested in the United States, where the
central figure is represented by the businessman who connects the bourgeois class with its state. The exponents of the current phase of capitalism are not the rentiers, but the businessmen, those vampires who, as was recently observed by the former president of the United States, the old Hoover, threaten to lead the regime to disaster as a result of their insatiable greed. The civil servant is nothing but a simple intermediary and not an active factor, even in the current phase of capitalism.

40

We must establish our definition of capitalism in the correct terms. In order to do so most effectively, we have set forth its precise relation with the feudal system. We must also employ this comparative method for the definition of the socialist economy that must be elaborated in relation to capitalism and to the form of state capitalism.

41

Engels observes that in the pure feudal regime money does not possess an economic function. This must not be interpreted literally: the money that existed then and
before that time was not a force of production; it was transformed into a force of production in the capitalist regime.

42

All regimes are part of the world order, but not because at the present time in all countries all the economic sectors conform organically to the type of society that historically prevails; many stubborn stains persist (preceding forms of production), but a single capitalist connective fabric unites them today by way of commodity exchange, and this fabric reveals the type of social organization that dominates the inhabited world. It is therefore a matter of differences of phases in space and time, but never of different types of capitalism.

43

As we said in sections 19-38 above, the nature of feudalism is distinguished by property divided into many parcels, which also corresponds to a divided economic management and a divided disposition of the products.

The nature of capitalism, on the other hand, is distinguished by the concentration of property in the
means of production, the masses of products, and economic management. The capitalist state assures the bourgeois class of its disposition and monopoly over the products; this is what is essential and what determines the social and historical dispute over the control of the mass of products.

44

With a purely polemical purpose, Marx appropriated the theory of the bourgeois economists according to which in capitalism the capitalists and the wage workers intervene on a free, level playing field on the market, and demonstrates with his economic analysis of capital that this free development does not lead to social equilibrium, but to the growing concentration of the means of production and of the masses of products in the hands of the capitalist class and, moreover, to the increasing pauperization of the workers. From the very beginning, however, the dispute is of a social order and its dynamic is also an opposition between economic categories (constant and variable capital). The two planes, the economic and the social, do not coincide. The proletariat does not know the specific amount of variable capital that it demands, but struggles to obtain a sufficient quantity of products and therefore a higher
wage for less effort. The unitary class struggle is a struggle for the entire product. The vulgar economist defines as capital the value of the assets of the factory, that is, the value of the buildings and machinery and of the money set aside to buy raw materials and pay wages, a formula that accords quite well with that of the ownership of “the means of production”. The Marxist economist defines capital as the total value of the mass of the product of any given cycle of labor: one day, one year, or that of a generation (the “total income” of the accountants). According to the doctrine of surplus value, this value of the product is classified under three headings: constant capital, that is, the value of the raw materials that are transformed by labor and the amortization (depletion) of the machinery; variable capital, or the value of the wages paid; surplus value, that is, the margin that is added to the first two in such a way that the sum of the three is the value of the product on the market that goes to the entrepreneur. As Marx says, thus destroying the Lassallean illusions of the German socialists, the proletarian struggle is not the struggle for the “the total product of labor” of the individual worker. Nor is it just a matter of conquering only the field of surplus value. Furthermore, in a collectivist economy not all the surplus value will go to consumption: a thousand useful social services are
necessary along with new investment for the need for expansion of production in the future. After all, only part of the surplus value currently goes to the personal consumption of the bourgeoisie; most goes to new investments, but the disaster of capitalist anarchy fully affects more than just the mass of surplus value and consists in the masses of products that are destroyed together with all the constant and variable capital and surplus value.

The real proletarian struggle is for the conquest of the entire product. Constant capital is the fruit of the labor of past generations: it must be seized from the bourgeois class and put in the hands of the victorious proletariat, that is, put to work for the realization of the classless society. Variable capital is the labor of the active social elements, that is, today the labor of the working class and tomorrow that of society. Surplus value arises from the current expenditure of the energy of labor and from the technical-organizational resources that are also the “legacy” of the past and which must also be placed at the disposal of society. First the working class in power, and then the classless society, will use all the masses of previously and currently produced products for general purposes. It is therefore a matter of the antagonism between the classes and their armed and political
formations, and not between numbers that represent the distribution of wealth between the classes.

45

Now that we have recalled the precise terms of the transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism, we must specify the distinctive characteristics of the transition from capitalist economy to post-capitalism. For at least a century now, post-capitalism has not been an unknown factor for us, but something that has been precisely defined. In accordance with the general rule, we can see in operation around us our examples of post-capitalist economy, just as large-scale manufacturing existed several centuries before the bourgeois revolution.

Here we may quote what we have already written in a previous text:

“As has already been pointed out, there are even true communist types under capitalist power; for example, firefighting services. When something is on fire, no one pays to put it out, and if nothing is burning the firefighters are still paid. We point this out in order to combat the thesis—whichever its author may have been—according to which the successive stages are: private...
capitalism, state capitalism as the first form of lower socialism, and higher socialism or communism.

“State capitalism is not a semi-socialism, but just plain capitalism, and furthermore, according to the Marxist theory of concentration, it is the result of capitalism and the condemnation of the liberal theory of a permanent regime of production in which the admirable play of competition would always place a new portion of capital within the reach of all.

“The ownership of the instruments of production is not enough to distinguish between capitalism and socialism (see “Property and Capital”[3]), but it is necessary to consider the economic phenomenon as a whole, that is, who has the disposal over the product, and who consumes it.

“Pre-capitalism: the economy of individually owned products. The product belongs to the independent worker, each of whom consumes what he has produced. This does not rule out the existence of castes, orders or privileged powers that may extract surplus products and therefore surplus labor to the detriment of the multitudes of small-scale worker-owners (sometimes grouped together in large masses by means of violence,
but without the modern division of labor applied to the productive process).

“Capitalism: associated labor (social labor in Marx); division of labor; the product is at the disposal of the capitalist and not of the worker, who receives money and buys everything he needs to maintain his labor power on the market. The entire mass of products passes through the monetary form on the way from production to consumption.

“Lower socialism: the worker receives from the unitary economic and social organization a fixed quantity of products that he needs to live and cannot have any more. Money disappears; it is replaced by consumer coupons that cannot be accumulated or exchanged for any but their designated purposes. A rationing card? Yes, in lower socialism there will be rationing cards for everyone, without the employment of money and without the existence of a market.

“Higher socialism or communism: in all sectors there will be a tendency to abolish rationing and everyone will take what he needs. Will someone go to a hundred movies in a row? He can do that even today. Will he make a phone call to the fire department after setting fire to his house? Some people do that today, but then there will be no
insurance payoff in communist society. In any event, then as now, the mental health services will be provided in accordance with pure communist economy: it is free and access is unlimited.

“Let us recapitulate:

• Pre-capitalism: moneyless economy or economy complemented by the use of money; small-scale, divided production.
• Capitalism: economy distinguished by universal employment of money; social production.
• Lower socialism: moneyless economy with rationing card; social production.
• Higher socialism or communism: economy without money or rationing card; social production.

“State capitalism, which only a cretin would call state socialism, is totally contained under the heading of capitalism.”
The Revolutionary Capitalist Nature of the Russian Economy

46

We have recapitulated all these basic notions in order to explain the development of the current counterrevolutionary process of which the events taking place in Russian society are a constitutive part. The latter cannot be examined unless they are integrated with the process as a whole, since if they were to be analyzed separately this would lead the unwary to alter Marxist doctrine, to admit new analyses and new perspectives for the intervention of a third class, of a third factor, thus falling into the trap of the Stalinist deception that attributes permanent functions to the state—no longer considering it as the instrument of a class, but as something that is engendered by a class—and abandoning the notion of its progressive elimination.

47

Our working method leads us to continually insist on points that we are already familiar with and to extend
our investigation to ever wider and diverse sectors that fall within the parameters fixed by these points, but never proceeding to innovations or inventions.

48

Competition and monopoly are not antagonistic concepts, but complementary, even in the market and exchange; the former leads to the latter. The bourgeois class asserts its power by means of monopoly: monopoly over the means of production and over the products.

49

In order to react against the social condition that is imposed on them by capitalism and which is favored by their dispersion, the workers are led to institute the monopoly of their labor power by means of the trade union. As a result, capitalism must reveal its nature, trusts must be founded and not only police but also economic functions must be attributed to its state. The cooperatives that collect dues from the wage workers for purposes of social assistance preceded the trade unions, but did not yet demand wage increases from the capitalists. Nothing could be more conservative than this; nonetheless, the socialist party penetrated these
traditional mutual aid associations and even charitable organizations to its advantage.

50

The formulation according to which the Russian economy “is tending towards capitalism”, contained in the proposed manifesto, must be clarified. What has taken place in Russia? The regression of the first embryonic post-capitalist characteristics of the economy; the reversal of domestic and international policies. The latter phenomenon is not an unavoidable result of the former.

51

In 1921, when Russia was isolated within its own borders due to the absence of revolutionary victory in the other countries, the level of the productive forces had declined to a low level, below the minimum. The delivery of products from the countryside to the city and vice versa, which had at first been assured by way of war communism, could no longer function because the proletarian state had been deprived of both the products from the city as well as those from the countryside. The legalization of free trade, which had been practiced up
until that time on the black market or by “speculators”, was absolutely necessary.

52

Lenin and the Bolshevik Party implemented the NEP in an economic context characterized by the existence of nomadic, patriarchal, feudal, and bourgeois forms of production as well as small nuclei of socialist economy. But one must not understand the word “socialist” in a narrow and inflexible economic sense, but in the dual economic and social sense as follows: 1) on the one hand, mechanisms of despotic intervention were introduced with regard to property rights (requisitions, etc.) and the egalitarian distribution of products (rationing, etc.), mechanisms that always characterize any “besieged citadel”—as Trotsky called it—but which can only be implemented with inflexible rigor and without exceptions by the class of the dispossessed and its party at the head of the dictatorship; and, on the other hand, a network of “free social services” was established, some of which (housing, transportation) are evidently compatible with the capitalist mode of production, but have never been nor will they ever be adopted by a bourgeois regime; 2) thanks to the
nationalization of large-scale industry, to the monopoly on foreign trade and to the establishment and management of large-scale agricultural enterprises based on associated labor, the dictatorial power of the proletariat controlled and directed the economy according to the demands and interests of the struggle against the internal enemy in the civil war and of the extension of the worldwide communist revolution.

As for the question of whether or not the NEP was capitalism, Lenin categorically responded: YES. Nor could it be otherwise since capitalism exists from the very moment that wages are paid in money and this money is used to buy food. This does not alter the nature of the state, which is still proletarian, and could still be proletarian since its nature does not depend on the economic structure, but on its class position and on the force of the development of the revolutionary struggle of the international proletariat.

Lenin, who on the economic field even proposed to allow foreign private capital to operate in Russia, with concessions of whole territories, advocated the strengthening of state power in order to confront the
social reactions caused by the measures associated with the NEP and to gain time to receive help from the western workers revolutions.

54

The problem was posed in these terms. Trotskyism proclaimed the intervention of a third factor, that of the bureaucracy. For us the current situation in Russia exhibits nothing new since capitalism is not characterized by the existence of private owners, but by the impossibility (due to state power) of the appropriation of products by the working class and by the payment of wages in money form. The economic process that has led us to the current situation (in which the individual is at the service of the state; the state is the employer; the public debt increases incessantly; ownership of private homes is allowed; houses are provided to professionals) is not the result of the social maneuver of the NEP, but of the reversal that has taken place on the political field and in the international position of the Russian state. The NEP left the state in the hands of the working class, which had taken control of it by virtue of the October Revolution and the Bolshevik dictatorship: the first renunciations in the economic field by no means necessarily imply revolutionary tactical and strategic
errors, nor later did they necessarily imply the reversal of the position of the state.

Socialism cannot be built only in Russia despite the fact that the proletarian October revolution followed in the wake of the bourgeois revolution of February 1917. In Germany, in 1848, a double revolution was also attempted, one that was both bourgeois and proletarian, but in vain: the bourgeois revolution was victorious on the economic and social fields, but only after the allied bourgeoisie and proletarians had been defeated on the political field. In Russia, after the double political and social victory of 1917, the social defeat of the proletariat took place that could be dated to 1928, but the social victory of capitalism has endured to this day.

We do not possess the documentary material for a detailed examination of the Russian economy, but we do have sufficient information to undertake a reliable evaluation. In conformance with the information provided by our work, “Property and Capital”, we see the essential factor of the current worldwide capitalist phase
in the enterprise (the construction business offers a good example) that operates without headquarters or any stable installations of its own, with a minimal capital but with a maximum profit, which may be realized because it has submitted to the state, which distributes capital and assumes responsibility for losses.

The civil servant is not a central figure, but a simple mediator. Facing the corps of state functionaries is the body of functionaries of the enterprises swarming with experts of all kinds, who are responsible for making sure that the state submits to the interests of the enterprises. An analogous mechanism functions in the USSR under other forms and different names. When one thinks that the enterprises of Moscow have been able to give the gift of the Metro to the city, we become aware of the extremely high profits earned by these enterprises in the other spheres.

57

This capitalism in Russia exhibits absolutely nothing new. As for state management, the latter is linked with a thousand historical examples, from the example cited above concerning the Communes of Italy, where, on the other hand, the first form of state investment in
industrial production was implemented (individuals were unable to marshal the necessary capital for the construction of the fleets: the Communes provided it). In this manner, states and kings always armed the first fleets and founded imperial companies, on the basis of which capitalism developed at a frenzied pace. Finally, we have the example of the recent British nationalizations.

To say that the Russian economy “is tending” towards capitalism has a double meaning. The first post-capitalist forms that followed the October revolution regressed and were reabsorbed. An economy that, for reasons stated above, we may call in the figurative sense “proletarian”, gradually regressed and then was violently deprived of the persons that, on the political plane, allowed it to be defined that way, by means of the destruction, including the physical destruction, of the revolutionary leadership of the Bolshevik Party, until it gave way to fully and purely commodity forms. In this resides the totally negative aspect of the course of Russian history since 1928.
Meanwhile, however, the entire vast field of the pre-capitalist, Asiatic, feudal Russian economy is showing a powerful tendency toward capitalism. This tendency is positive and is in turn a premise of the world socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky themselves saw this necessity and were the pioneers of electrification, the only way to bring production up to the level of production in the West in order to fight imperialism more effectively. Stalin threw the international revolutionary plan overboard, but delivered a very significant impulse to the industrialization of the cities and the countryside. More precisely, the latter was an irresistible factor in the Russian social situation after the fall of the rotten Czarist and Boyar structure. Lenin discerned the possibility that his party would be the standard-bearer of the proletarian political revolution in the world and, in the meantime, also of the capitalist social revolution in Russia: only on the condition that these two victories are achieved can Russia be capable of becoming economically socialist. Stalin said that his party realized economic socialism in Russia alone; actually, however, his state and his party limited themselves to being the bearers of the capitalist social revolution in Russia and Asia. However, above and beyond individual men, these historic forces work for the world socialist revolution.
An analogous evaluation may be made with regard to the Chinese revolution. Here, too, workers and peasants fought for a bourgeois revolution through various phases and could not proceed beyond this kind of revolution. The alliance of the four classes: workers, peasants, intellectuals and industrialists, reproduces the alliance of 1789 in France and of 1848 in Germany, an alliance that is completely in accordance with Marxism in its doctrine and its tactics. The destruction of the centuries-old Asian feudal structure is, however, an accelerative factor of the world proletarian revolution, on the condition, of course, that the latter is successful in the European and American metropolis.

It is a customary cliché of vulgar Marxism, insufficient and scientifically false, to ask who is the beneficiary and the personal consumer of capitalist exploitation, thus forgetting innumerable quotations from Marx about the impersonal soul of Capital and about the depersonalization of the capitalist (for whom the accumulation of surplus value counts more than his individual life and the lives of his own children). It would be equally insufficient and scientifically false to consider “crypto-entrepreneurs” and “crypto-businessmen” as the beneficiaries of the fruits of Russian capitalism (as we said before, it is not the fruit that counts but the whole
plant). For us, the beneficiaries are not—as they were not in any social formation—the functionaries of the state bureaucracy (in Russia the simple mechanic in a factory is a bureaucrat, as he is today in England: everyone is “nationalized”), but a differentiated layer that cannot be individualized only within the narrow domain of the Russian case.

On the basis of this premise, we must state that despite any iron curtain, this apparatus or, more precisely, this network of channeling of the wealth communicates with the network of world capital. The foreign trade of the state is an immense scale that is never exactly balanced, but which continuously robs the Soviet working class. There is also the enormous dead end of the financial maneuvers that have a repercussion on the legal and illegal financial centers of Asia and Africa. And there are the American loans for the war against the Axis that are still being paid off (the Americans finally reached the conclusion that the loan of millions of Russian proletarian corpses to defeat Germany was a business deal that more than offset the cost of production of a corresponding number of atomic bombs).

The coexistence and emulation today, the evident alliance of yesterday, with the commitment to dismantle the communist parties of the West and the unhesitating
participation in the blocs of anti-fascist liberation constitute, on the one hand, the confirmation of the political disruption that went as far as counterrevolution and, on the other hand, they are aspects of the economic bargaining and bonuses paid to world capital with the sweat and the life itself of the Russian worker. That is why the decline of the party, of its power and of the state is not still underway, but is a historical fait accompli (Trotsky’s widow has perfectly confirmed this). Today the historical function is paralleled on the economic and political planes: the establishment of capitalism throughout Russia.

59

The defeat of Spartacus at the foot of Vesuvius meant both the political and social defeat of the slaves, and the social regime based on slavery remained in power. Diocletian’s victories over and repeated waves of repression carried out against the Christians, however, who were true political and class conspirators, did not result in the consolidation of the regime of the slave-owners: under the sign of the triumph of a new religion the fall of that social regime took place, followed by the advent of medieval feudalism.
When we ask ourselves why Engels, after the defeat of 1848, devoted his time to writing *The Peasant Wars in Germany* and to the study of the defeat of 1525, we answer that it is necessary to understand the counterrevolution in order to prepare the revolution of tomorrow. We must do the same thing today, not isolating one sector or one problem, but framing everything in the context of the whole.

Likewise, in the past century, by constructing its definitive victory, the bourgeoisie could celebrate the many defeats that it incurred in the past. This same thing is true for the proletariat, which—as Marx says in *The Class Struggles in France*—is not “prepared” for its triumph in the world by victory, but by a series of defeats. Thanks to its class party, it will be victorious by once again appearing as it was in the beginning of its struggle and in the lapidary programmatic formulas contained in the *Communist Manifesto*, formulas that still have not yet become obsolete, because they are unsurpassable.
One can only profess and defend the Marxist doctrine—which defines history as a succession of class struggles, each one of which is constituted by a mass of men who are in a parallel position in relation to the forces and the systems of production—to the extent that one can prove that every social class has an invariant mission and program during the entire course of its history, from its first affirmations and battles. Thus, the proclamations that Christ delivered to the mobs of the slaves are connected with the fall of the Roman Empire and of classical society; thus, the first demands for civic liberty and freedom for the peasants were linked to the storming of the Bastille and to the bourgeois revolution throughout the world, and the same flag has always flown since then. With all the more reason, the modern proletariat, the first to liberate itself from religious or idealist formulations of its own aspirations, constitutes a true historical force in the Marxist sense and will not fail to be victorious since it has already been proven and demonstrated that the new organization of the productive forces had hardly just arisen, when it had already fixed its sights on its historic goal and the difficult and steep road that leads to it. Consequently, we must struggle tirelessly against the manias of the neo-Marxists and the “new analyses”.
The fact that we have been defeated, and that we therefore find ourselves in a counterrevolutionary period, explains why there are so few of us and also why confusion has arisen in our ranks. This does not, however, lead us to falsify the theory of revolutionary Marxism by means of the admission of the arrival of a third protagonist, of a new class on the stage of history. We do not need to discover new types or new stages, nor do we have to invent new powers for the state capitalism that, as we have already pointed out, displays nothing original and was even the first form by means of which the capitalist class first affirmed itself in the epoch of the Communes, in the 1100s.

To complete our exposition, and to reaffirm the opportune warning of the Left about the degeneration of proletarian politics, we append a schematic presentation that represents the relations that connect the working class, its economic associations, the class political party and the central organs of the party. The explanations that we append show that the two proposals that
converge in the formula of the mass party, the labor party of the English type and the Stalinist party, have the same root since they replace economic determinations with the will of individuals, and definitely lead to the same result: to impose the decisions of the party leadership on the latter.

63

One other point gives rise to doubts and vacillations: what is our perspective? As always, we only have one: the international proletarian Revolution, when the conditions for it are ripe, conditions that today are almost all equally unfavorable (see the report of the Rome Meeting of April 1, 1951 in the pamphlet “Party and Class”, cited above). As for the current outlook, three hypotheses seem to be possible: 1) the peaceful absorption of Russia by the U.S.; 2) the victory of the USSR; or 3) the victory of the U.S. in case war breaks out between the two powers.

64

Already, in the first imperialist war, the victory of the stronger capitalist sector (that of England, which had not been defeated for almost two hundred years and had
never been invaded) necessarily determined the least favorable conditions for the eruption of the revolutionary attack of the international proletariat. Had England been defeated, the outcome would have certainly been more favorable. The same thing must be said of the second imperialist war which concluded with the victory of the London-New York axis, with an overwhelming predominance of the second term of the binomial axis over the first. And what of the third imperialist war? We shall not hesitate to assert that the victory of the United States would represent the most sinister outcome possible. It is true that we are lacking the class forces to intervene in these formidable events, and it is also true that we must preserve our autonomy with respect to both equally counterrevolutionary powers, and fight both “crusades” to the end. It is also true, however, that we cannot stand aside from the only evaluation that is compatible with the Marxist doctrine; that is, the fall of the heart of capitalism leads to the fall of the whole system, while the fall of the weaker sector could preserve the life of the worldwide bourgeois system, in view of the modern method of military annihilation and destruction of the state of the defeated country, and of its reduction to a passive colony. And it is precisely in accordance with this political line that capitalism can be prevented from absorbing the reactions that are
emerging in opposition to the policies of Stalinism within the proletariat, and that these energies will find a place in the new institution that will be based on the principles of revolutionary Marxism, which will once again return to be an active force in history.

**Schematic Presentation of Marxist Centralism**

*The central organs of the party*

*The class political party*

*Economic associations*

*Social class*

1. The individuals who compose the class are driven to act in discordant directions. Some of them, if they were to be asked or if they were free to decide, would do so in the sense of the interests of the enemy ruling class.
2. Those who are organized in trade unions tend to act in a way that is opposed to the interests of the employer, but in an immediate sense and without any capacity for converging in a single united action and for a single goal.
3. The militants of the political party, formed in work within the class and its associations, are prepared to act in the sense of the single revolutionary goal.
4. The directive organs of the party, which emanate from
the base, perform the role of a revolutionary leadership, in the continuity of the theory, of the organization and of its tactical methods.

The position of the Left consists in the simultaneous struggle against the following deviations:

a) The rank and file of the party is qualified to decide on the action of the center if it is democratically consulted (workerism, laborism, social democratism);

b) The supreme center (political committee or party leader) is qualified to decide the action of the party and the masses (Stalinism, the practice of the Comintern) with the right to discover “new forms” and “new courses”.

Both deviations lead to the same result: the rank and file is no longer the proletarian class, but the people or the nation, which are always oriented in the direction of the interests of the ruling bourgeois class, as Marx, Engels and Lenin have correctly affirmed.
Appeal for the International Reorganization of the Marxist Revolutionary Movement

Synopsis

Premise: An extended, serious contemporary crisis of the proletarian movement. First symptoms of a reaction against Stalinism.

Invitation: International reorganization of the genuine, autonomous and homogeneous revolutionary forces.

Points of orientation:

1. Rejection of all confusion with anti-terrorist and antidictatorial positions.
2. Break with both the traditions of social patriotism of 1914-1918 as well as with those of the Stalinist alliances with the capitalist states in the war of 1939-1945, and with the policy of the parallel movements and blocs of the Resistance.
3. Condemnation of pacifism as perspective and as method of agitation, and of all world federalism between bourgeois states.
4. Condemnation of the double strategy that seeks to reconcile revolutionary and class-based goals with
campaigns and demands of united, democratic and popular fronts.
5. Declaration that in Russia the social economy tends towards capitalism and that state power no longer has anything proletarian about it, and the condemnation of support for the Russian state in case of war.
6. Shifting of the class forces in all countries to the terrain of autonomy against all states, with the ultimate goal of shattering capitalist power in the most industrialized countries of the West, which stands in the way of the revolution.

Amadeo Bordiga
1951

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Spanish translation available online (in December 2013) at: http://laizquierdaitaliana.blogspot.com/2011/09/lecciones-de-las-contrarrevoluciones.html
1. See the French translation in *Programme Communiste*, no. 3, April 1953 and the synopsis of this “Appeal” at the end of this text.

2. See the text, “The Historical ‘Invariance’ of Marxism”.


4. This topic was later addressed with extensive statistical documentation, together with fundamental theoretical, historical and political arguments in the following texts: *Struttura economica e sociale della Rusia d’oggi; Rusia e rivoluzione nella teoria marxista; “Dialogato con Stalin”; “Dialogato coi morti”; and “Bilan d’une révolution”*. We must also observe that the present text lacks an analysis of the social and productive relations in agriculture, where the non-socialist (and locally even pre-capitalist) nature of the economy is even more apparent; where even the state form of the Sovkhoz is constantly giving way to the cooperative form of the Kolkhoz, and in the latter production organized by parcels of private, personal and family-based property are assuming an ever growing and determinant role. This aspect has been exhaustively addressed in the texts mentioned above.

5. This question was discussed in the “Thread of Time” article, “Arms and Investment”, in *Battaglia Comunista*, no. 17, 1951.