

This extended obituary of Ante Ciliga was written by the French academic, and onetime member of the ICC, Philippe Bourrinet in Paris in 1992.

It was translated from the French by George Gordon, beginning in 1993. It should go without saying that there is no copyright as far as he is concerned. The particular difficulties involved in translating it are discussed in [Appendix A](#).

Many thanks to Neil Matthews for help with the Russian language aspects of the text.

AN AMBIGUOUS JOURNEY **Ante Ciliga (1898-1992)**

by Philippe Bourrinet

It was with extreme discretion that the French Press reported (*Le Monde*, 28 October 1992), in a few meagre lines, that Ante Ciliga had died in Zagreb (Croatia). There was no precision as to the date of his demise. He was presented as an "old leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party" who had known the Stalinist camps and the camps of the Ustaša Croats.

Ante Ciliga - pronounced "Tsiliga" - became famous to the point of becoming the emblem of the opposition to Stalinism and to "the Bolshevik system" of state capitalism set up by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. This was the result of a literary testimony, his major book, *Au pays du grand mensonge*¹, published in 1938ⁱ. This book was published in French, republished, translated into numerous languages and has remained permanently attached to Ciliga, his identity, to the point of making us forget the tormented journey, finally ambiguous, of a whole political life which didn't stop in the 1930s.

For generations of militants emerging from the opposition to Stalinism, and also

for the historians of the workers' movement, the name of Ciliga is bound up with the struggle of the left against Stalinism from the 1930s onwards. This was a period in which the few voices faithful to the principles of the humanist socialism of Marx which were raised in the worker and intellectual milieu were smothered by the campaigns of Stalinism, as well as those of the democracies, and its supporters the "fellow travellers" like Aragon, who sought to show the virtues of "socialist" Russia and sang the praises of the GPU in their poems. Well before the start of the Cold War, the reality of the USSR was "discovered" by the testimony of Khravchenko and others. Following that, with the historical erosion of Stalinism, the "fellow travellers" changed into virulent adversaries of "communism". One voice could be heard which, from the left of Stalinism and Trotskyism, denounced the system of state capitalism founded by Lenin and Trotsky and completed by Stalin and his regime.

Recollecting this historical context, however, doesn't mean we can dispense with a real biography of Ciliga. For the itinerary of Ciliga is far from being summarised in his book. It has travelled through hesitations and ambiguities, rich in lessons for the historian of the workers' movement, who studies the relations between "internationalist" engagement and old "nationalitarian" reflexes, among the known figures of communism. Ciliga's type of "left communism" in the period between 1931 and 1935, to the left of Trotskyism and close to anarchism, encapsulates all the hesitations of Eastern and Central European militants who became revolutionaries in the period following the First World War, all of whom were searching - consciously or unconsciously - for a national identity. By virtue of this, Ciliga's journey raises important questions about "communist" engagement in the Balkans.

I. - From Croatian Nationalism to World Revolution

Besides the biographical elements provided by Ciliga himself, in "Croatian" [2](#), we have access to an autobiography in French (1983), as far as we know never published [3](#). This - naturally - must be compared and "corrected" against the facts and archives which we have.

Ciliga was born on 20 February 1898 in Šegotiči (pronounced "Shegotichi") in a village in Istria, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where there was a mixed population of Italians, Croats and Austrians. The contingencies of history were such that Ciliga, Croat by language and culture, was successively an Austrian citizen until 1919, then an Italian citizen until 1945.

Coming from a family of Croat peasants, his grandfather shared with the young boy "the interest which he showed in Croatian culture and in the struggles for national emancipation directed against the urban Italian bourgeoisie and the Germano-Austrian administration".

After having been a family shepherd until the age of 7 years, Ciliga was then put under the charge of his veterinarian uncle in Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina) where he began his primary education, and then sent to secondary school until 1914. In 1912, during the Balkan wars, when he defined himself as "a Croat with Yugoslav tendencies", he began to get involved in street demonstrations against the Austro-Hungarian regime, which - we may recall - dominated Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But already, he had become interested in French literature. Also in the "Great Revolution" he had found his heroes in Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Robespierre and Marat. Considering himself "Slav" and French at the same time Ciliga discovered several countries: "Croatia, Yugoslavia, Russia and the Slav world in general were my first country, France became my second".⁴

Up until the war, as a young secondary school student, Ciliga came to prominence by his anti-Austrian agitation in school. This resulted in him being expelled, he was only able to return to favour by the intervention of a Bosnian MP. But after the Sarajevo outrage he was expelled from all the schools in Bosnia and had to return to Istria. Again, he was excluded from school "for having read to the other pupils *The Life of Jesus* by Renan..." which was very dangerous in Catholic countries.

1914 made of him an eternal nomad. The war with Italy led to his evacuation to Moravia, where he finished his studies at the high school in Brno, in the Czech language! But in this "Austrian Manchester", where the worker question posed itself acutely, he came "to consider as logical and probable the end of capitalism and the advent of socialism". But it was a question of radical socialism, non-nationalist: "...my rallying to socialism was oriented from the start towards an internationalist socialism in declared opposition to the national egoism which prevailed in the European socialist parties engaged in the war". In particular, he understood that Czech ultra-nationalism, like nationalism everywhere, was nothing more than a reactionary screen for the Czech bourgeoisie, who never felt the slightest bit uncomfortable about oppressing their "fellow nationals", the peasants and workers.

II. - From the Russian Revolution to communism (1917-1926)

At the time of the revolutionary outburst in February 1917, Ciliga was doing his military service in the Austro-Hungarian army. From that moment the young man, aged 19, became fascinated by those who wanted to plough the "Russian soil in depth", the Bolsheviki: "The position of the Bolsheviki - against the imperialist war and for universal peace, without annexations or reparations - had acquired my sympathy". But, according to him, the "coup of the 7 November" filled him with doubts. The peace of Brest-Litovsk, in January 1918, troubled the consciousness of this "Austrian Slav", not his class consciousness but his nationalitarian one: "...I asked myself: has not Lenin passed from opposition to the imperialist war to peace with German and Austrian imperialism, leaving us, us Austrian Slavs, under the yoke of Germans and Hungarians?"⁵.

Continuing his studies at university, Ciliga joined the Croatian Socialist Party at the time when Yugoslavia was being formed. This didn't excite much enthusiasm from him, because it would mean being placed "under the sign of the bourgeois state" and being dominated by the Serb people which Ciliga, being a good Croatian patriot, saw as "in a certain way taking the place of the old Austrian and Hungarian oppressors".

But, despite this "Croat sensibility", Ciliga went on very quickly to become an internationalist radical, travelling from country to country in pursuit of the Workers' Revolution.

At the beginning of 1919 (26-27 January) at Zagreb the conference - and not the congress, as Ciliga claimed - of the Croatian Socialist Party took place. He was the most radical orator and immediately formed an autonomous left fraction, a fraction from which the Croatian section of the Yugoslav party was created in 1920. But between 20 and 23 April 1919 in Belgrade the left minority of the Croatian party and the social democratic parties of Bosnia and Serbia formed themselves into a Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia ("SRPJ", fore-runner of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia), which had applied for affiliation to the Comintern⁶.

At this time, Ciliga, - but is this the benefit of hindsight, more than 60 years after? - was convinced that the Yugoslav State was going to shatter: "From February-March 1919, I had arrived at the conclusion that the first Yugoslav

State was going to collapse through lack of understanding between Serbs and Croats, however much that common state might have been objectively as much in the interests of one as the other." He thought then that the resolution of national conflicts would pass the communist party by.

Situated in the left radical fraction, Ciliga quickly became the object of police attention, and he had to get out of Croatia. Intending to continue his university studies in France, his taste for adventure and action, however, took him to Hungary in the middle of outright revolution (spring 1919). He immediately joined a detachment of Yugoslav volunteers but he quickly became disappointed by the lack of radicality of the Hungary of Bela Kun in agriculture, by its "respect for the autonomy of the big landed proprietors". Thus, a "revolution which does not touch the big property owners during the first six months is not a real revolution, it is condemned to perish." This indecision in which he saw the moderating influence of Hungarian social democracy⁷ persuaded him to later join the communist camp. He returned to Yugoslavia in May 1919, shortly after the crushing of the Revolution of the Councils by the armies of the Entente. He was then in charge of the clandestine work of organisation in Slovenia, disguised as a hawker of the workers' press.

Since 1919, the defeat and dismemberment of Austria-Hungary had made Ciliga, born in Istria, an Italian citizen. He gained much from participating in the organisation of the maximalist Italian Socialist Party in Istria in Summer 1920, involved in openly revolutionary agitation in Italy.

But, as he himself wrote, he also had the same experience of the indecision of social democracy which he had observed in Hungary with the Socialists and Communists. During the occupation of the factories, he noted that maximalism and demagoguery went perfectly well with opportunism and cowardice. He was arrested in the autumn and spent the winter in prison in Trieste and Capod'Istria. He thought that in Italy the anarchists were as radical as the Bolsheviks in Russia and that Malatesta could become the Italian Lenin. He came to see how much he had been misled.

Leaving prison in February 1921, he experienced the fascist reaction. The Pola trade union centre was burnt down and workers' organisations destroyed. With peasants from his native district, he organised armed resistance against the "squadristi" fascists. But he knew well that the army would arrive to support the latter, who also benefited from the assistance of the Dalmatian authorities in conjunction with the Italian State.

At this time he had already interpreted the fall of the councils in Hungary "as the end of the revolutionary wave of 1917- 1919". The appearance of fascism confirmed him in this view. Also, he thought above all of orienting himself, theoretically and practically, towards preparation for the next wave.

From 1919 to 1924, he pursued his university studies - all the while carrying on his revolutionary activities in Hungary, Italy, Slovenia - in Prague, then Vienna, and finally in Zagreb.

Amongst the Yugoslav student immigrants, around Prague, then Vienna, Ciliga created communist nuclei. In Prague he organised a "Marxist Club", and then an "International Federation of Marxist Students". The Czech Slansky, one of those involved in the Prague trial, became his successor. Knowing Czech perfectly, he entered into the service of the Czech CP press, collaborating in the weekly *Socialdemocratic* (later *Kommunist*), and in *Rude Pravo*.

In Vienna, he continued to collaborate in the Czech daily. Above all he had cause - as a delegate for the communist students abroad - to take a firm stand against the "tactic of terrorism" which had been employed by a section of young Yugoslav communists in 1921. This "tactic" had to be officially abandoned, for changing to the illegal conspiratorial organisation.

From September 1922 up to 1925, he accepted growing responsibilities in the Communist movement in Yugoslavia. In 1922, in Zagreb, he assumed the functions of party secretary for Croatia and the editor of the weekly *Borba*⁸, the legal and official organ of the CPY, the communist press being forbidden in Serbia, and enjoying a great popularity in the workers' milieu. In 1923 he was nominated a member of the central committee. Finally, during winter 1924-1925, as a representative of the Croatian party, he became a member of the central committee of the CP of Yugoslavia⁹. In 1920, the CPY had 60,000 members and directly influenced 200,000 unionised workers.

In 1920 the Yugoslav Communist Party was in effect expanding, in a country with an agricultural population of 76%. Having formally excluded the tendencies of the Right, the CPY had joined the Communist International (CI) at the congress in Vukovar in June 1920. Placing itself on the parliamentary terrain, the new Party had won numerous municipalities in Belgrade. The municipal elections had given them 59 seats. In a situation of social tension, marked by the repression of the railway workers' strike (April 1920), the

government went on to the offensive: they dissolved the Communist municipality of Belgrade (August 1920) and drove the Communist councillors out of Agram (Zagreb). Finally, the Yugoslav CP which had staked everything on elections found itself somewhat discomfited¹⁰: on 29 December a special decree ("Obzana", i.e. proclamation) pronounced the dissolution of all the Communist and trade union organisations, closing the publication offices of the CP, and graciously handing the Communist clubs to the social democrats. A law of the 30 July 1921 made the situation worse: it put the CP outside the law and expelled it from Parliament and the municipalities which it controlled. The death penalty could be imposed for the propagation of communism.

After 1921, a left fraction by the name of "Left Group of the CPY" was constituted and had made contact with the German KAPD in order to denounce the opportunist course of the parties of the Third International¹¹.

The leaders of the Comintern also noted that the CPY had been the victim of slackness and opportunism. They hadn't even published the 21 conditions of adherence, even as "theses on revolutionary parliamentarism". For the speakers of the IVth congress of the CI, the party chiefs "concentrate all their attention on electoral victories and avoid frightening petty bourgeois elements in showing them what it is to be a communist party and what are its methods of struggle"¹². On the other hand, the other unpardonable crime, the CP possessed no clandestine organisations. So, the party found itself dismembered and almost ceased to exist. According to official figures, the number of members fell from 60,000 to 3,000 in 1928, before climbing back to 12,000 in 1941¹³, but on the Stalinist positions of "Greater Serbia".

It is remarkable that in his autobiography and his interviews Ciliga says nothing about these internal problems, about the question of parliament, nor about the left oppositions in the party.

Ciliga really made himself known around the thorny problem of nationalities in the Yugoslav state. At the moment when the Party collapsed - at the point when it did not have a single person elected in 1923 in the general elections - the Bulgarian Party had accused the leadership of the Comintern of neglecting the "national question".

In fact, under pressure from the Russian party, the Comintern had gone a long way in making concessions to "nationalitarian" tendencies in the Balkans. The Communist Federation of the Balkans, created in 1920 and supposed to

unitarily regroup communist Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Yugoslavs and Turks, became, after 1922, a battle ground between Bulgarians and Yugoslavs over the question of the national affiliation of Macedonia. Then the Vth congress of the CI (1924) had made the national question the order of the day. In the case of Yugoslavia, Zinoviev had defined that state as "a multinational state dominated by the Serbian bourgeoisie and composed of numerous oppressed peoples". Consequently, he recommended the "separation of Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro from the framework of Yugoslavia and their constitution into independent republics"¹⁴. This congress was also, notably, one of "Bolshevisation" of the sections of the Comintern, something on which Ciliga said not a word.

At this time he was far from being an oppositionist and followed the official "line". We find that Ciliga - against the "right" of the party which foresaw "the constitution of a limited provincial autonomy"¹⁵ and the "left" who preferred "to let the future socialist revolution take care of the 'national question'"¹⁶ - agreed with the orientation of the Comintern. Already, with the agreement of the top leadership of the party, he had proposed in *Borba* ("Struggle") a "radical" counter- project: the transformation of the monarchist and centralised Yugoslav state into a Federal Republic of five national republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia) and two nationally mixed republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina)." He defended this project against the communist leader Sima Marković, who seemed to defend the Greater Serbia option, resting on the positions of Austro-Marxism and Stalin in 1912¹⁷.

This project of Yugoslav federation - as we know - was revived and put into practice by Tito after 1945. In any case, Ciliga, on his own admission, became very popular outside Serbia, and was coopted onto the central committee of the Yugoslav party. He was then openly supported by Moscow for his "radicalism"¹⁸.

But the proposition of the Vth congress to form three independent republics left Ciliga sceptical, since the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Vojvodina were being passed over in silence. For Ciliga these plans "plainly destroyed Yugoslavia". These politics of the Comintern were applied until 1926. Everywhere, even in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Vojvodina, the tactic of "self-determination of peoples" was applied. Ciliga was made the instigator of these policies, as the party secretary for Croatia and editor of *Borba*. In an article¹⁹ he denounced the slavery of 9 million non-Serbs

submitted to the dominant Serb nation of 3 million people. As the politics of the Comintern at that time was hostile to "Greater Serbian" tendencies - the better, no doubt, to conform to the politics of the Bulgarian CP - Ciliga became equally a member of the Yugoslav Politburo during winter 1924-1925.

During this same period, on the instigation of Zinoviev, the Comintern enrolled the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) of Stjepan Radić into the Krestintern (Peasant International, affiliated to the CI). This was a policy which appeared noxious even to Gramsci²⁰ but Ciliga didn't seem to have the slightest doubt about it. More than this, he called for a common front with a party which the CI in the beginning had classified as a party of the bourgeoisie²¹.

All these leadership functions attracted the attentions of the police. Ciliga was expelled in April 1925 on the pretext that though being born in Istria he was in fact an Italian citizen... He was handed over to the fascist police and put in prison for an armed action carried out in 1921. He was restored to liberty, along with the 120 peasants who had resisted the "squadristi" with him, following a lucky amnesty. Emigrating to Vienna, he represented the Yugoslav party as a liaison agent between the Comintern, the Balkan Communist Federation and the Moscow "centre". Finally, in the autumn of 1926, he was sent to Moscow "to teach at the Yugoslav party school there and to take part in the work of the Yugoslav section of the Comintern". Up to this time he had never imagined calling into question the orientations of the Comintern, which seemed right to him, and totally ignored - it seems - all the left currents which fought against its official line. The names of Bordiga and Korsch were never cited, even though Ciliga - through the Slovenian organ of the Italian Communist Party *Delo* ("The Cause") - must have known about them.

III. - In Russia: in the country of the Big Lie (1926-1935)

When Ciliga left Vienna for Moscow important changes were going on at the highest levels of the apparatus of the Comintern, and consequently at its head. Bukharin, allied to Stalin, had replaced Zinoviev, who was himself allied to Trotsky. This translated into an abandonment of the theory of "the liberation of oppressed peoples" in Yugoslavia. Consequently the "Right fraction", in fact the Serbian nationalist tendency, triumphed in the party: by a series of manoeuvres the Serb Sima Marković replaced the head of the CPY. But when the national conflicts broke out again in 1927, Marković was dismissed from all his posts and replaced by Djuro Cvijić, representing a moderate "left fraction", allied

however with trade unionists. This left had made Zagreb its stronghold. But Bukharin revoked the authority of the "left" leaders and with the help of the Bosnian Josef Čižinski (known under the name of "Milan Gorkić") decided to "Bolshevise" to the utmost by forming a political centre composed of Yugoslavs living in Moscow.

At the end of 1925 a certain Josip Broz returned to Russia, where he had been since 1915 a prisoner and then a fighter in the Red Army. He was going to begin a meteoric rise in the Party first as one of Bukharin's men, then after his arrest that same year, as one of Stalin's. The two destinies crossed without meeting directly: Ciliga's was to make its way to Moscow to get to know the Russian prisons and isolation units, Tito's was to return to Yugoslavia to know a slow but sure rise to power.

If Ciliga had understood the risk, would he have made his way to Moscow in the middle of a purge of the top of the CPY? He at least affirmed in 1937: "... in going to Moscow, I risked losing my freedom of movement. But the desire to study on the spot the experiences of the Great Russian Revolution carried me away. The repeated setbacks suffered by the communist movement in Europe proved the necessity of profoundly improving our tactics."²²

All Ciliga's wanderings, deceptions, hopes, imprisonments and political activity are well known from his book written in France between January 1936 and July 1937 and published by Gallimard editions in 1938 under the title *Au pays du grand mensonge*; his Siberian exile and the tale of how he left the USSR are described in a second volume (written between 1938 and 1941) and published in 1950 under the title *Sibérie, terre de l'exil et de l'industrialisation*²³.

In order to understand the itinerary of Ciliga, it is necessary to take the main lines of his testimony, particularly now when the media are affirming the "fall of communism" while passing over in silence the groups and elements which, far to the left of both Stalinism and Trotskyism, denounced the "Big Lie" of Russian state capitalism which was presented by Stalin, and his adversary Trotsky - in agreement for once - as "socialism" and a model of development of the "productive forces".

When Ciliga first arrived in Moscow in October 1926, he was immediately struck by the misery and backwardness of the "Fatherland of Socialism", noting particularly "the ascension of whole social groups". He arrived as the NEP was ending in debacle, with an economy more and more paralysed and 2.2 million

unemployed²⁴. He quickly realised that foreigners like him, members of the Comintern, were considered to be "living like lords" by the Russian worker sunk in poverty.

Having obtained a doctorate in history from the University of Zagreb in 1924, Ciliga was chosen to teach history to the Yugoslav section of the Communist University of Western National Minorities (KUNMZ) of Moscow. Each year 25 new pupils arrived in this CPY School created in 1925, for a 4 year course, taught entirely in Serbo-Croat²⁵.

But Ciliga did not consider himself as a "red academic", a functionary of the Comintern. On his arrival he automatically became a member of the Communist Party of the USSR, the life of which seemed more interesting to him than that of the Comintern.

From his arrival, the Comintern appeared to him not as "the headquarters of the world revolution" but as a simple branch office "of no great importance" attached to the "propaganda service" of the Russian party. While participating himself in the VIth Plenum of the Comintern (December 1926), he realised that this old "Convention of the World Revolution", as Trotsky defined it in 1919, was already in the hands of Stalin. Being present at the discussions of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, he was above all impressed by the speeches of the latter which emphasised that the danger from the Right in the Russian party was due above all "to the petty bourgeois character (of Russia) and the weakness of revolutionary tendencies in the Western proletariat"²⁶.

Listening to all the debates of the Russian party and above all the opinions of the Russian workers, noting the repression of the workers, of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency suspected of publishing an illegal leaflet demanding only the improvement of working conditions in their factory, Ciliga became very pessimistic about the future of the "Socialist Fatherland". Whereas previously Ciliga - on his own admission - never felt any doubt as to the justice of the politics of the USSR, he now came to the conclusion that "... the evolution towards socialism is definitively halted, the revolution dead, and in consequence everything is lost..."²⁷. In Russia no less.

From 1927 he began to come into agreement with the Russian Trotskyist opposition²⁸, whose influence "among the party cadres grew day by day". But his opposition, it seemed, was very discreet, since he was able to participate in the activities of the VIth Congress of the Comintern (August 1928) just before

Trotsky was expelled from the USSR²⁹.

In fact it was Yugoslav matters which led Ciliga into the ranks of the Trotskyist Left Opposition. In Moscow there were 120 militants of the Yugoslav Communist Party, most of them workers, who, through their work, were more involved in the affairs of Russia than those of the Yugoslav party.

While Ciliga was in Moscow great changes were going on in that party which he seems to have had little information about in the isolation of his Muscovite school. The triumvirate Bukharin-Gorkić- Manuilskii had recruited - he claimed - nothing but "gangsters who never had anything to do with the Yugoslav movement" and who had been sent to completely "Bolshevise" the party. At the VIIIth conference of the organisation of Zagreb the Djaković-Tito fraction took power in the name of the struggle against "fractionism" represented by the "left". But soon (August 1928) Tito was arrested and imprisoned for 5 years.

The position of Yugoslav communism deteriorated rapidly because of the concessions to the anti-Serb Croatian nationalist movement and above all because of the slogan "class against class", purely adventurist, decreed by Stalin after the VIth Congress of the Comintern³⁰.

In June 1928 the assassination in parliament of the peasant MP Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, with the blessing of the king of Yugoslavia and the Serb nationalist parties³¹, put the match to the powder keg. The national question definitively took over from the social question, nourishing all kinds of nationalist and terrorist adventures.

The assassination of Radić - whose party had been a member of the Krestintern in 1924 before Radić chose to participate in the Yugoslav government in 1925 - and the troubles which followed in Croatia allowed the king of Yugoslavia to install his personal dictatorship in January 1929. He dissolved Parliament and banned political parties, first of all the Yugoslav CP. This happened in the middle of the "Third Period" of the Comintern, a period of calculated "adventurism" where armed insurrection was being prepared on every street corner³². In a party led by Russian agents, some of whom were provocateurs in the service of the police³³, the leadership of the CPY was swallowed up in adventurism. It proclaimed that the "only solution to the crisis for the working class and the peasantry was the armed struggle, civil war against the hegemonic domination of the bourgeoisie of the Serbs of Serbia". This translated itself - besides reinforcing nationalist anti-Serb sentiments - into pistol duels between

communists and cops. According to Ciliga, and the CPY, the repression led to hundreds of communist deaths; in reality thirty or so³⁴. This was serious enough, and the party lost several hundred members. But all the radicalism could not hide the profound vice of the CPY: its support for nationalist organisations on every side, which, at least after 1928, concretised itself in a tight collaboration with the Macedonian nationalists (VRMO)³⁵ and the Ustaša terrorists³⁶.

In 1929, at the time of these tragic events, Ciliga was already formally in the Left Opposition. He and his Yugoslav comrades in Moscow repulsed by a crushing majority (90 votes to 5) the resolution of support for the Comintern's policy in Yugoslavia. Interestingly, the CPY "left" devoted its attention to a self- critique of its national policy:

*"Addressing the national question we find ourselves on the horns of the following dilemma: socialist revolution or bourgeois revolution in Yugoslavia. The left fraction had formerly advocated exploiting national problems in the interests of the revolution. But this 'exploitation' resulted in the communist party and the workers' movement being reduced to serving the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed peoples of Yugoslavia. Well before we saw the reconciliation between the red flag and the tricolour in France, between the International and the Marseillaise, we were seeing in Dalmatia the alliance of the Croat tricolour and the red flag, of the International and the national anthem Our Beautiful Homeland. The revolutionary and internationalist workers' movement risked dispersing itself into the merely "radical" movements which exist in the nationalities of Yugoslavia."*³⁷.

This lucid statement was quickly forgotten by the same Ciliga several years later in his pro-Croat activities -which we will discuss later.

Ciliga and some others had formed a Trotskyist group with about twenty members under conditions of severe illegality. A centre of 6 members had been nominated and was composed of 4 Yugoslavs: Stanko Dragić, the real leader of the group, an old member of the central committee of the CPY; Mustafa Dedić, the old secretary of the trade union committee of Herzegovina; Stepan Heberling, who came from Vojvodina; and finally Ante Ciliga. There were also

two Russians: Viktor Zankov and Oreste Glibovskii³⁸. This group came to recruit the wife of Tito, Pelegea Denisov-Belusov, until she was arrested and disappeared in 1934-1935, without any complaint from Tito³⁹.

This clandestine group was in contact with the Trotskyist organisation in Moscow which provided it with the letters and documents of Trotsky and Rakovsky. At the same time, Ciliga and his comrades were in close contact with workers in the Russian factories.

As expected, the activities of the group were uncovered by the GPU. A Comintern commission (the "Soltz commission", after the name of the chair), with the zealous support of the Yugoslav Politburo, decided to expel Ciliga and two militants of his group for one year (without delay!). Twenty others had to leave Moscow. In line with Stalinism's practical bent (in the beginning, anyway) the apparatus tried to "buy" Ciliga by offering him a well-paid job as an archivist and lecturer in Leningrad. After having personally seen Kirov, "the boss" before his murder, he was nominated head of courses at the Communist University of that town. But he did not cross lock, stock and barrel to the side of the new "red" bourgeoisie, camouflaged under the tawdry finery of bureaucrats.

This was during the forced collectivisation of the countryside, where the discourse was simple: "Those who want to enter the Kolkhoz stand on the left, and those who want to go to Siberia stand on the right!..."⁴⁰. There followed famines and mass shootings of recalcitrant peasants. As for the workers, promised a "happy and joyous life" under the Stalinist five-year plans, they saw their salaries cut by 50% compared to 1913. "We actually live worse than in the time of the capitalists!". Their demoralisation - which explains in part the triumph of the counter-revolution - was total: "... what can we do now? It is us who wanted Soviet power, how can we fight it?"⁴¹.

The fact is that although the Dragić and Ciliga group - on their terms - was a particular example of an underground life where new ideas were born, the communist Croat had to endure a terrible isolation. Ciliga's students - coming from the working class - were the parvenus of the system, and therefore "the worst enemies of any authentic workers' movement, as such a movement would have necessarily to seek the annihilation of the whole bureaucratic system."⁴²

In the course of his discussions with the Trotskyist intellectuals, Ciliga began to have serious doubts about this current and its leader Trotsky. At the end of the day they cared little for the lot of the working class and for them "Stalin (carried

out) the essentials of the program of the Opposition" but with more brutality. He had arrived at this conclusion in 1930. But was it more a question of a conclusion reached *a posteriori* from 1937?⁴³ - that state capitalism had triumphed in the USSR, sustained as much by Trotsky and the intellectuals of the Opposition as by Stalin:

"... Stalinists and trotskyists (identify) state capitalism with socialism and the bureaucracy with the proletariat. Trotsky, as well as Stalin, made the state pass for the proletariat, the dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the proletariat for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the victory of state capitalism over private capitalism and over socialism for a victory for the latter." ⁴⁴

It was in that state of mind in which - he said - he underestimated his divergences with the Trots, that he was arrested on the 21 May 1930 in Leningrad after having visited his Moscow comrades, more interested in an immediate activity in the factories (leaflets, strike slogans) than in an activity of long term theoretical reflection.

IV. - Prisons, Isolation Units and Siberian Exile (1930-1935)

Though Dragić escaped temporarily from the GPU, once arrested he endured the Leningrad prison with his friend Ciliga. There were daily shootings of prisoners. All the same, at this time "the prison is the only place in Soviet Russia where people express themselves in a more or less sincere and open way." Compared to this, social demoralisation is like being condemned to death in silence "without a cry of revolt against the government which puts them to death"⁴⁵. Also, Ciliga deduced there that the forces of revolution and the left had drained away.

In November, Ciliga was transported to the isolation unit of Verkhne-Ural'sk, the political prison along the Ural mountains to the North of Magnitogorsk. This isolation unit⁴⁶ was the last where you could speak freely and where you could exercise freedom of the press and assembly. The 250 detainees (around 180 communists and 70 anarchists) held regular political meetings, with a president and secretary for the sitting. The majority occupied themselves in writing articles for manuscript newspapers which circulated by the "interior post" (baskets between cells). There was also a library of political works. A

strong majority of prisoners were Trotskyist (120 to 140) and received pamphlets and circulars from Trotsky. With the presence of Mensheviks, Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, 16 Decists ("Democratic Centre" group) and 3 partisans of Miasnikov's "workers' group", there was "a real illegal parliament of Russia"⁴⁷.

According to Ciliga, the social composition of the isolation unit was essentially "intellectual". No more than 15% were workers. The opposition communist sector was composed of 43% Jews, 27% Caucasians (Georgians and Armenians) - the Russians with a few representatives of other nationalities made up just 30%. It's an interesting fact that the Russian and worker element was particularly strongly represented in the extreme Left: the Democratic Centralism group and predominantly in Miasnikov's Workers' Group. This "Russian" national phenomenon also manifested itself, according to Ciliga, with the anarchists. Amongst the Trotskyist militants was found a large majority of young Jewish intellectuals and technicians coming from the petty bourgeoisie of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. A disturbing fact is that amongst the prisoners there was "a strong group of old soldiers and Chekists", coming directly from the Apparatus.

At Verkhne-Ural'sk Ciliga was reunited with his Yugoslav and Russian comrades: Dragić, Dedić, Zankov, Glibovskii. They decided to militate in the "collective of Bolshevik-Leninists" of the isolation unit. But these were divided into three tendencies:

→ a "Right" tendency led by the professors Solntsev, Iakovin and Stopalov. This group, author of "theses of the three" came to recruit Dingelstedt. This was the most important fraction. It recommended a "reform from above" and finally - for industrialisation, five year plans etc. - it wanted "... the same thing as Stalin" but only in a "more humane" form⁴⁸.

→ a small centrist group led by Trotsky's son-in-law Man-Nivelson and Aaron Papermeister, which hardly distinguished itself at all from the "Right" since it edited a common manuscript journal with them entitled *Pravda v tiur'me* ("Truth in Prison").

→ the "Left" fraction, to which the friends of Ciliga belonged, which wanted a "reform from below" based on the working class. Its theoretical weakness meant that not only did it define the five year plans as a bluff but it denied that there was a world economic crisis. It published a journal *Voinstvuiushchii Bol'shevik* ("Militant Bolshevik").

Outside these fractions only the Trotskyist Densov considered, basing himself on Lenin, that the Soviet economy was state capitalist.

The *Militant Bolshevik*, in which Ciliga wrote under the pseudonym Richard, was produced once a month or every two months, comprising 10 to 20 articles, in separate notebooks, in three copies (one for each wing of the prison)⁴⁹.

Ciliga sided with the "Left Bolsheviks" evolving very quickly away from the Trotskyist mould where "a citation from Trotsky had the value of a proof"⁵⁰. He stated that the Stalinist bureaucracy had become "little by little the core of a new ruling class"; consequently, it was necessary to lead demand struggles, no less than in the capitalist countries; and for this same reason to ally oneself with the socialist and anarchist workers in the factories. For a new struggle of the revolutionary class, a "new revolutionary party" was needed. This position, five years late, was in the end just that of Korsch in 1926, whose writings Ciliga seems to have ignored.

The increasingly radical evolution of Ciliga was determined first of all - according to him - by the attitude of the Trotskyist majority in the isolation unit which displayed an infallible monolithism: the "militant Bolsheviks" had to dissolve and suspend the publication of their journal, or else be expelled because of it. The "group of 30" Left Trotskyists (of which Ciliga was one) proposed a new publishing committee composed of a representative of each tendency, and publishing a single organ for all the Communists. Indeed the "militant Bolsheviks" were not represented on the publication committee.

The "right" and "centre" Trotskyists excluded them with methods which proved "that between Trotskyism and Stalinism there are many points in common"⁵¹. The other reason was that the GPU, which had agents inside the prison, pushed for a split.

The result was that in Summer 1931 there were two Trotskyist organisations:

- the collective of "Bolshevik-Leninists" (majority) of from 75 to 78 members;
- the "Collective of Left Bolshevik-Leninists", 51 or 52 members strong; it edited the journal *Bolshevik-Leninist* with the pens of V. Densov, N. P. Gorlov, M. Kamenetskii, O. Pushas and Ciliga⁵².

The radicalisation of Ciliga and the Left Bolshevik-Leninists is as much explained by the horrors of collectivisation and the five year plans as by the

positions of Trotsky.

Ciliga had already observed - while he was teaching in Leningrad - all the privileges of the rising class, and the misery of the worker. Gradually, as more prisoners arrived in the isolation unit, he confirmed for himself the massive massacre of Ukrainian peasants, the deportation of from 5 to 10 million Muzhiks, the long agony of exiles in Siberia for whom life expectancy did not exceed two years. A third of the working class living in veritable slavery for the Pharaonic works of Stalin (the Baltic-White Sea canal etc.).

The extreme left Trotskyists, represented by Ciliga and his friends, were extremely dissatisfied with the grip of the eulogistic positions of Trotsky in 1932⁵³ on the "truly unprecedented actual success" of the Stalinist political economy.

Naturally enough a bitter discussion opened up in the Trotskyist milieu of the prison on the nature of the USSR in 1932. They voted on a resolution for or against the "workers' character" of the USSR: in which there were 15 votes for. Another resolution, defended by those who were still "militant Bolsheviks" reaped 15 votes, all speaking like Trotsky of a necessary "revolutionary policy" based on the "economic foundations of October"; the regime was "above classes" but the "dictatorship of the proletariat" had disappeared.

But above all, there were the extremist "negators", of which Ciliga was one. Their minoritarian resolution, supported by 15 votes, proclaimed that the bureaucracy was a real class hostile to the proletariat; and that therefore only the social revolution could lead to socialism.

In 1932, on reading the latest documents of Trotsky, the rupture of Ciliga and 10 militants with the Trotskyist collective was consummated. A declaration was written where they clearly indicated that the Program of Trotsky reinforced "the illusions of the Western proletariat" in Stalinism, dressed up in the label "proletarian state". The conclusion was a rejection of Trotskyism as a left current of Stalinism: "Trotsky and his partisans are too closely tied to the bureaucratic regime in the USSR to be able to lead the struggle against the regime to its extreme consequences". Trotsky was "basically the theoretician of the regime of which Stalin was the realiser"⁵⁴. An article by Ciliga entitled "Proletarian and Bureaucratic Opposition" marked his passage into the extreme left.

In fact, in the isolation unit, the influence of the non- Trotskyist extreme left was decisive and, according to Ciliga, becoming wider and wider.

To begin with there were the Decists, certainly the most divided into fractions. Starting out as Leninists, but against bureaucratic centralism, they had been against the Workers' Opposition in 1920. They capitulated a great deal to the first Five Year Plan which seemed to them like a victory over the NEP. In the isolation unit, in contrast, and no doubt elsewhere, they were very much radicalised but confused and divided. There were 3 or 4 Decist fractions. But, with some important nuances, they were very close to the "Workers' Group" of Miasnikov⁵⁵, whose leader at Verkhne-Ural'sk was Serge Tiiunov. The Miasnikovians defined Trotskyism as an "opposition of the high-up functionaries" of the bureaucracy. They criticised Leninism to its very roots along with the "dictatorship of the party". For them the decisive thing was that workers should be able to have the freedom to choose between the workers' parties competing within the worker milieu. Since 1923, they were little by little coming to the position⁵⁶ that what reigned in the USSR was bureaucratic state capitalism.

As for the Decists - led by Medvedev (1885-1937) who was sent back to the isolation unit in 1935 while Ciliga was in Siberia - they were rallying to the theses of Miasnikov. For the Decist Iakov Kosman, Lenin had put industry into the hands of the bureaucracy. For Shapiro, another Decist, the Workers' Opposition in 1921 had not represented the interests of the proletariat but "those of the trade union bureaucracy". But, in contrast, in the manner of the council communists of Germany and Holland, another Decist Volodia Smirnov affirmed: "There never was in Russia either a proletarian revolution or the dictatorship of the proletariat. There was simply a popular revolution by the base and a bureaucratic dictatorship by the top." As for Lenin, the sacrosanct icon of the Russian revolution, it was necessary to break it: "Lenin has never been an ideologue of the proletariat. From start to finish he has been an ideologue of the intelligentsia".

In fact, for Volodia Smirnov - like Otto Rühle elsewhere⁵⁷ - Bolshevism expressed, just like Mussolini, Hitler, Ataturk and Roosevelt, a universal tendency towards state capitalism. Such theses were scandalous in the extreme left and Smirnov was excluded from the group. Meanwhile an extremely important discussion was opened up on the question which confronted Ciliga who judged that this tendency in Russia was "relatively progressive" and Tiiunov who saw it as a "purely parasitic" phenomenon⁵⁸.

Ciliga evolved in the same direction as the left communist tendencies. After having demolished the image of Trotsky, who he saw as nothing but an oppressor - following a report which he was given by a Kronstadt sailor on the responsibility of Trotsky for 10,000 shootings carried out by the Cheka after March 1921 - he set about breaking his veneration for Lenin. Despite having a "place of honour in the hearts of the workers and in the pantheon of history" he had become the "mouthpiece of the Soviet bureaucracy" by liquidating socialism in the economic sphere. In the final analysis, "Lenin had opened the way to Stalin".

At the moment when Ciliga - with Dragić - had to leave Verkhne-Ural'sk to be deported to Siberia, a "Federation of Left Communists" was founded in the isolation unit in 1933 which was 20 to 25 members strong and encompassed the Workers' Group, Tiiunov, some Decists and a few old Trotskyists.

The year 1933 was heavy with menace, with the coming to power of Hitler. The question of a new international posed itself with the failure of Stalinism in Germany. The left Trotskyists, ignoring the new position of Trotsky, judged that the appeal for the formation of a Fourth International was "a premature and demagogic slogan". Smirnov came out in favour of the fusion of social democrats and communists. Tiiunov, in the manner of the German and Italian left communistsⁱⁱ, came out energetically against any "reissuing of the Third International". Ciliga, on his side, maintained in writing that "the union of two cadavers (social democracy and Stalinism) will not produce a living body".

There is still plenty to say about the political groups with whom Ciliga had discussions before his departure from the isolation unit: the left Socialist Revolutionaries, divided, according to him, between Trotskyism and left communism (Kamkov group); the anarchists who "incarnated the chivalrous ideal", the Armenians and the left Zionists purely occupied by "their" respective national problem...

On the 18 May 1933, therefore, Ciliga left the isolation unit, his detention having been graciously prolonged by two years by the OGPU with the acceptance of the Politburo of the Yugoslav CP. Nothing kept him there: stricken with hunger, tempted by suicide, Ciliga was deported for three years to Siberia (Irkutsk, Yeniseisk, Krasnoiarsk), occupying the place of an economist in the bank, then in the "Sevpolarles" forestry trust. All his observations on the conditions of life are amply recounted by Ciliga in his book (Second part,

published in French in 1949).

He made use of his Italian citizenship, after much effort to obtain an Italian passport, by telegrams. With the aid of his family in Italy, and despite a prolongation of his exile of three years stay in Siberia in 1935, Ciliga succeeded in being expelled from the USSR by making use of his foreign status. Without knowing till the last moment if he was going to be sent to the Arctic Circle to be shot or shut up in a camp, Ciliga found himself on the 3 December 1935 stepping off a Russian train at the frontier - in Poland.

It was the end of an odyssey in the country of the big lie, certainly the richest and most instructive for his analysis of the political life of the extreme left in the prisons and camps of the Soviet Gulag Archipelago. By contrast, his comrade Dragić, a man eminently combative and courageous, disappeared forever in the terrible Solovki Islands after attempting to escape to Poland in 1934.

V. - The Second Odyssey of Ciliga (1936-1945)

As we might expect, all Ciliga's manuscripts, letters and notes were taken away from him by the GPU men and so slumbered in the archives of that organisation.

Although he didn't record it in his memoirs and interviews, when passing through Czechoslovakia, Ciliga made contact with two Trotskyist militants: Vladislav Burian and Jan Frankel⁵⁹, and thus obliquely with Trotsky. Without wasting any time, a few days after leaving the USSR Ciliga wrote to Trotsky who responded⁶⁰, and to the "Opposition Bulletin" in Russian. His testimony was published immediately in Russian and French by the Trotskyist press. He launched the idea of material and political aid to help the deportees "by means of pressure from the European workers and the democratic movement". This idea was revived by Trotsky from December 1935 in the launching of a "Ciliga Committee" for the defence of communist political prisoners⁶¹, following the important revelations made by the Croatian communist.

But the divergencies with the Trotskyist movement quickly showed themselves on the big day. Ciliga suggested a committee which defended "Bolshevik-Leninists" as well as "Socialist Revolutionaries" and imprisoned Mensheviks. He noticed that elsewhere, in regard to Hitler's Germany, the Trotskyists hastened to call for a common struggle of the social democrats and the Stalinists

against fascism. Trotsky refused. A bloc with the Mensheviks and "SRs" abroad would be harmful, above all because it would lay them open to attacks from Stalinism.

Having settled in Paris at the end of January 1936, Ciliga published some articles in the *Biulleten' oppozitsii* (Trotskyist organ in Russian edited in Paris until 1940). This lasted until May, the date when the writing collaboration ceased. Ciliga had committed the unpardonable "crime" of also sending articles to the Menshevik review of Dan in Paris: *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* ("Socialist Messenger")⁶², which contains some very informative articles.

Despite everything, Ciliga, who had been on the extreme left of Trotskyism and had finally come round to some of the positions of Russian left communists (Workers' Group, Decists), was moving away from these and little by little approaching the positions of social democracy. It was not his positions on state capitalism that made Ciliga a "Menshevik" - as was claimed by certain Trotskyists who in this way amalgamated Left Communism and Menshevism⁶³ - but his spirit stamped as it was with democratic idealism. Trotsky was able to write, not without reason, on 22 June 1936, that Ciliga was not a marxist but an element who was "semi-liberal in his thinking, humanitarian, idealistic, certainly very honest in his ways". But he added also - something which was manifestly wrong to anybody who had read the book which Ciliga started to write, and completed, in 1936 - that "even in the isolation unit, he (was) still that which he had always been: an idealistic and exalted democrat who, from being Stalinist, (had) become anti-Stalinist but not much of a marxist"⁶⁴.

In fact, the whole work of Ciliga was to make known by every possible means his experience in the Russian isolation units and prisons, which was done by the translation from Russian of his book published by Gallimard in spring 1938. This book was elsewhere seized by the Gestapo in 1941 but had been published in English a year before⁶⁵.

Before the war the route taken by Ciliga was going to be contradictory. He lived by his pen, but he also wrote some articles for "Socialist Messenger" in 1937⁶⁶, for the liberal Zagreb journal *Nova Evropa*⁶⁷, and for the revolutionary syndicalists of *Révolution prolétarienne*⁶⁸, oscillating between liberalism, anarchism, and nostalgia for Croatia.

In Summer 1937, he returned to his home village in Istria where he was put under surveillance by the fascist police. On his arrival in Yugoslavia he was

arrested and put in prison for six months; according to him on the instigation of Yugoslav Stalinists who had infiltrated the political police, the chief of which was a Communist. Nevertheless he was able to get back to Paris, something allowed to "Titoist" Communists. In a style which could only be Stalinist, in 1952 he was accused of having been, since his days in Russia, an agent of Mussolini's OVRA⁶⁹.

In fact, in 1938, Ciliga was already in contact - while writing the second part of his book - with the "revolutionary syndicalists" of *Révolution prolétarienne*. At the same time as Victor Serge, Ciliga led a campaign against Trotsky concerning his role in the repression of the insurgent sailors of Kronstadt. They were presented by Trotsky as "completely demoralised elements, men who wear elegant baggy trousers and have hairstyles like pimps". Whilst denying his direct participation in the repression and minimising it, Trotsky fully approved of it⁷⁰. For Ciliga, who still remained faithful to certain positions of left communism, "the repression of Kronstadt, the suppression of workers' and Soviet democracy by the Xth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, the elimination of the proletariat from the management of industry, the introduction of the NEP already signalled the death of the revolution". It was no more than an alliance of state capitalism and private capitalism⁷¹. Ciliga - it is true - was given his education at first hand from an insurgent communist sailor who recounted it to him in the Leningrad prison in 1930, as he tells it in his book *Au pays du grand mensonge*.

In 1939, on the eve of the world war, Ciliga joined a discussion circle founded by the Germans Arkadi Maslow and Ruth Fischer, The Russians Gavriil Miasnikov - the old leader of the Workers' Group who had lived in France since 1929 - and the "Left Menshevik" Vera Alexandrova, literary critic of "Socialist Messenger". The circle was in a state of great disorientation: Maslow was pessimistic about the German proletariat, suffering from "provincialism". Miasnikov, a "volcanic energy" and a "genial autodidact" progressively lapsed into "Soviet patriotism" concerning the war with Finland⁷².

At the time of the debacle of 1940, Ruth Fischer and Maslow succeeded in leaving France for the American continent. Ciliga wondered whether to leave France for the USA or, while staying in the country, to "make a circular voyage across Europe at war to see with (his) own eyes the aspects of crisis and decadence of the European continent"⁷³.

By this time, Ciliga had already abandoned all reference to the marxist and

proletarian movement. Influenced, as he said, by Keynes and Spengler, he considered that the revolution was a thing of the past, that Europe was entering into decadence leaving the place clear for "the Kremlin's ambition to colonise Europe"⁷⁴.

Having finished his book "Siberia, land of exile" in August 1941, Ciliga, like Ulysses, returned to his Croatian "homeland", animated by a patriotism which had hardly left him since his youth.

Ciliga made the Paris-Zagreb trip via Turin, Trieste, Pola and Istria - where he stayed two months in his family home - then passed by Dubrovnik to return to Bosnia-Herzegovina, then from there to Croatia, where he arrived in December 1941⁷⁵.

To understand the odyssey of Ciliga and to respond point by point to calumnies which he was subjected to in the days of Tito, it is necessary to recall certain historical facts.

After the invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941 by the armies of Hitler, the German emissaries to Zagreb had wanted to install Vladimir Maček, president of the Croat Peasant Party (HSS) and old vice-president of the government - overthrown by the pro-Allied coup d'état on 27 March - who had decided for the alliance with Hitler and Mussolini. But he had refused to become head of the Croatian state that the IIIrd Reich had wanted to create after the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. In addition the German choice was to orientate itself towards the Ustaša movement, of which the chief in Zagreb was Colonel Kvaternik who proclaimed on the radio the creation of the Independent State of Croatia ("Nezavisna Država Hrvatska", or NDH) and took power in the name of poglavnik (chief) Ante Pavelić. It is interesting to note that Maček of the Peasant Party gave his support and called for collaboration with the new government.

Having taken refuge in Italy, the leader of the Ustaša - in return for promising to give Dalmatia to Mussolini - was allowed to return to Zagreb on 15 April with his henchmen. Allied to the Axis, he immediately declared war on Great Britain, and later on the USSR and the USA. In exchange for this, Germany consented to give Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia, while in Serbia they installed a puppet government, Italy divided Slovenia with the Reich; finally Bulgaria received most of Macedonia and Hungary got "Hungarian" Vojvodina.

Within a few days of its appearance the Ustaša regime decided to undertake "ethnic cleansing", faced with 2 million Serbs in its state (against 3.3 million Croats and 700,000 "muslim" Bosnians). Serbs, Jews and Gypsies were proclaimed "inferior races". The result was a terror beyond name: 600,000 Serbs massacred directly or in the death campsⁱⁱⁱ; 30,000 Jews exterminated; the special tribunals gave them sentences of death carried out within 3 hours. These massacres carried on until the Summer of '42 with the benediction of the Catholic Church and the Croatian Franciscans who saw as "a godsend" the forced conversion of a part of the Serbs who hadn't been massacred⁷⁶.

The newly Italian Dalmatia became a land of asylum for persecuted Serbs and Croats; but also for the Četnik Serbs, sometimes allied to the Italians for their zeal in the struggle against Tito's partisans, and who came in their turn to massacre the Croats of Dalmatia. Out of pure self-interest, Germany and Italy, confronted by the success of Stalinist propaganda and the partisan movement among the workers and peasants of Croatia (both Serb and Croat), put a brake on the massacres of Orthodox Serbs⁷⁷.

It was under these conditions that having hardly arrived in Zagreb via Bosnia-Herzegovina - not as a companion of Pavelić, as was maintained by Titoist propaganda⁷⁸ - Ciliga was put in prison under a warrant issued in old Yugoslavia. According to him, behind this arrest was the hand of Tito, whose agents had infiltrated the whole police apparatus of the Ustaša movement. The Stalinists, he claimed, suggested to the police that Ciliga "was the political representative of Moscow for Yugoslavia and that Tito was only a guerilla military specialist"⁷⁹.

At the end of his detention, where he explained to Pavelić, who visited the prison, that he was no longer a Communist⁸⁰, he was sent in June 1942 to the terrible extermination camp of Jasenovac⁸¹, bearing a sentence of death but combined with a delay.

But, as he acknowledged himself, Ciliga owed his survival to his "Anglophile" reputation^{iv}. In effect, the defeat of Stalingrad had shaken the Ustaša state. A conspiracy of the ministers of the interior and defence was formed in order to take the Croat state into the camp of the Allies, exactly like the Italian fascists in 1943. They (even Pavelić, it seems, who had made contact with the USSR and the British) were waiting for a landing of the Allies in Dalmatia before passing definitively into the other camp.

By the grace of these interventions from on high, Ciliga was liberated from the camp on the first of January 1943. Was that grace due to Archbishop Alois Stepinac, as is claimed by the Titoist propaganda, and for glorifying the Croatian state in different publications? Nothing could be less certain⁸².

But what is certain is that Ciliga at this time - as is clear from the way he presented himself in his books about Russia - was no longer either a marxist or an internationalist but a Croatian nationalist, apparently pro-Allied.

It is certain that Ciliga published a great deal in Zagreb during the whole of 1943 until the Summer of 1944. He wrote for the Catholic review *Spremnost* ("Preparation") aimed at intellectuals. His articles concerned his experience in Russia⁸³. In the absence of direct access to Croatian archives, it is difficult to understand the positions defended by Ciliga on other questions, save indirectly by citing Croatian academic works. Thus, for example, on 19 September 1943, in *Spremnost*⁸⁴, he published an article where, after the Italian defeat, he called for the integration of Istria into the Ustaša state "for the restoration and reinforcement of Ustaša political and cultural positions in Istria".

Whether he had also written in the official organ of the Ustaša state *Hrvatski narod* ("Croatian People"), as his Titoist adversaries accused him of⁸⁵, is something that needs to be verified. On this matter, as with certain articles in *Spremnost*, Ciliga maintained a total silence in his memoirs and interviews.

In 1944 he published (in the "Istria dialect" !) his descriptions of his odyssey in Istria and in the concentration camp of Jasenovac⁸⁶.

Towards the Spring of 1944, Ciliga decided to leave Zagreb and to head for Austria and Germany to study "the complex relations which existed between Hitler and the German people"⁸⁷. In fact the situation had become tricky for him. He was believed to be working for some government or secret service, maybe British, maybe Russian. At the same time, in Summer 1944, with the Normandy landings, Pavelić discovered that the landing place would no longer be Dalmatia. Also he could no longer tolerate a pro-Allied tendency in his government. The Anglophile opposition (the two ministers Lorković and Vokić) were beheaded in September after the attempt on Hitler's life.

Paradoxically, according to Ciliga, because he was believed to be an Allied agent he was able to obtain a visa for Vienna. He had initially refused in May

1944 to be part of a Croat delegation participating in the "European Anti-Bolshevik Congress" which Goebbels was preparing in Vienna. Because of this Ciliga had been nominated as professor of history and sociology at the University of Zagreb⁸⁸.

At the same time, for the second time, he was invited to join the ranks of the partisans of Tito who controlled the whole of Dalmatia and the Croatian countryside. He refused out of fear, so he said, of a trap whereby he would be arrested by the Ustaša police, having been denounced by the Titoists, and then executed.

In fact he was able to leave Zagreb for Vienna by the grace of the local Gestapo chief Konrad Klaser⁸⁹, an old Austrian communist, who had taken a particular interest in him. It turned out that Klaser was an agent of Tito, who went over to the Titoists in May 1945 and was liquidated as a pro-USSR Cominformist. This Tito "mole" in fact believed that Ciliga was a "communist agent" like him.

From July 1944 to February 1945, Ciliga travelled with his awarded visa to Vienna and Berlin, recounting in his memoirs the atmosphere reigning in the two countries. The end of the war found him in Switzerland, after a stay in Bavaria, where he met the American troops.

VI. - "Double Faced Janus" (1945-1992)

After the war Ciliga spent the rest of his life between Paris, where he lived for a few years, and Rome.

He became known in France, Italy and other countries as much by the republishing of his book on the "Big Lie" and by his pamphlet on Lenin⁹⁰ as by his books on Yugoslavia. We can cite: *La Yougoslavie sous la menace intérieure et extérieure*, in 1951⁹¹; *La Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito* in 1972, and finally (only in Italian) *Il Labirinto Yugoslavo*⁹² in 1983. This last book was the last one published in his life on the subject.

This great interest in the problems of the Yugoslavia built by Tito translated itself in fact into a total commitment to the Croatian nationalist movement as its "left flank". Towards the end of his life - in 1983 - Ciliga wrote⁹³ that through anti-Stalinism "he had not ceased to support the foreign policy of Tito while

always criticising the his domestic policy" on the problem of nationalities.

In fact, immediately after the war, Ciliga continued to orient his activity in Paris towards Istria, where he returned several times (there was an Allied garrison there), and avoided being taken away by Tito's police several times. But they failed, he said, because he had some friends "among the partisans and the political police of Tito"⁹⁴.

At the beginning of the 1950s, while living in Paris, Ciliga wrote a book in French (see above) which was hostile to Tito and which earned him a new attempt to arrest him. In fact the literature published by him in "Serbo-Croat" had a clearly Croatian nationalist, anti-Serb, tone. Ciliga asked the question: "How long will the Croatian people groan under the Serbian yoke?"⁹⁵. Earlier, he had suggested seriously in the "revolutionary-syndicalist" review *La Révolution prolétarienne*⁹⁶ that if Tito resolved the national problem through real equality "between all the Southern Slavs" he would be "the truly great political man of our country". In 1952 he seems to have found such a man, with some criticisms, in the chief of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), Maček⁹⁷. This man had been exiled to the USA and Ciliga proposed that he should contribute to the "liberation of the Croatian people" and take the leadership of a pan-Balkan committee⁹⁸.

This insertion into the extremely heterogeneous Croatian émigré community allowed him to be published as far away as Argentina in a politico-cultural review, elsewhere largely open to Ustaša currents, *Hrvatska Revija - La Revista croata*, published in Buenos Aires⁹⁹, where Pavelić had taken refuge.

Based in Rome towards the middle of the '50s, Ciliga affirmed himself as a political man in the Croatian emigration, of the social democratic tendency, publishing its material. In the name of the Croatian National Council (Hrvatski narodni odbor), which was based in Germany under the leadership of Ivan Jelić¹⁰⁰, he published from 1958 to 1960 a bulletin called "Bulletin of the Croatian National Council in Italy" (*Bilten Hrvatskog Narodnog Odbora u Italiji*). Following this, it was replaced by a "Bulletin of Croatian Social and Democratic Action" (*Bilten Hrvatske Demokratske i Socijalne Akcije*) from 1961 to 1973. Within this latter social democratic organisation (HDSA) Ciliga was not just a contributor, he was officially the political secretary¹⁰¹.

The development of large-scale Yugoslav emigration, particularly Croat at first

but then from the rest of Yugoslavia at the end of the '60s and the beginning of the '70s, gave him a growing political place and recognition in a milieu strongly marked by nationalism.

In 1960 less than 10,000 Yugoslav workers were employed in the GDR (East Germany); in 1972 it was 400,000 and 640,000 in 1976. Many others emigrated to Australia, Canada, USA, and even to Sweden and Switzerland. The majority of them were Croats. There followed a proliferation of nationalist groups from left Stalinist to extreme right Ustaša, of associations - for example, a hundred for the 43,000 Yugoslavs in Sweden! - and magazines (more than 80 monthly Croat magazines across the world)¹⁰².

1971 also produced student demonstrations in Zagreb with Croatian flags and slogans - in typical fashion Ciliga called it the "Croatian Spring". These demos were supported by the CP of Croatia which elsewhere had contacts with the Croatian nationalist émigrés, Ustaša included. The real reason for this is that the Croatian bourgeoisie was strongly discontented with the federal state which obtained a third of its foreign currency from Croatia which then received no more than a tenth. A severe purge operated by Tito followed and a certain number of writers and intellectuals went into exile to reinforce the exiled Croatian opposition. This was the real beginning of the decomposition of the Yugoslav federal state¹⁰³.

In this context Ciliga more than ever carried on his activities of "editor", "publisher" and "political adviser" of nationalist magazines. Starting in 1974, the magazine tapped out on stencils became a printed quarterly. It took the name of "On The Threshold of the Future" (Na pragu sutrašnjice) and seems to have lasted until the early '80s. This magazine under "publisher-editor Dr. Ante Ciliga", with numerous other contributions, was more markedly on the Right. It wanted a "dialogue on democratic, national and social problems of the Croatian struggle" and addressed itself to the "Croatian public" of "the Right and the Left".

Enjoying a certain notoriety as a Croatian social democratic politician, Ciliga tried in vain to get himself elected to the congress-assembly of the Croatian National Council (HNV - Hrvatsko Narodno Vijeće) in 1975; he was able to obtain no more than half the votes needed to be elected¹⁰⁴. This council, pro-Western and based in the USA, had been founded in 1974 and nevertheless assembled all sorts, from pro-Muscovites to Ustaša, in an attempt to politically control the million and a half Croats living outside the frontiers of Yugoslavia

in the name of the unity of the "émigré Croatian people"[105](#).

Certainly Ciliga, in his writings, foresaw the possibility of the disappearance of Yugoslavia (the man of the hour was, according to him, Djilas). He stressed the risk of the reconstitution of a Serbian bloc after Tito's demise "with the annexation of the mixed regions by their Serbian minorities"; then "it will inevitably produce dangerous tensions which will explode into civil war, nationality war, religious war". If Serbia remained the dominant power without sharing its power - with the other national bourgeoisies, we would say - then "we will end up with the disaggregation of present Yugoslavia, into a partial confederation comprised of Croatia and the other republics of central and Western Yugoslavia which want to be attached to it, Kosovo will probably go over to Albania and Macedonia to Bulgaria"[106](#). This prognosis, as we now know - pretty much in detail, seeing that the extension of the Balkans conflict has only just started - is plainly verified in the killings perpetrated in the name of the nations of Croatia, Serbia etc. The Ustaša of 1941 have found successors of their quality in the Stalinist or ex- Stalinist parties, reconverted to "democracy", which can be found in Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.

A psychological and political characteristic of Ciliga, in his journey from communist to social democrat was his search at all costs for a "united front" of all political parties, a common understanding in the name of pluralism. But in the later part of his life this was realised under the flag of the "Croat nation". This was still true in 1979 when the HNV - to which Ciliga had proposed his candidature - found itself in crisis[107](#).

Later, in 1980, with the death of "chief" Tito, Ciliga was able to announce the end of that Yugoslavia which was born in 1945. But this was just one more occasion for putting forward a nationalist solution, the creation of a Croatian state, but inserted into a "Confederation of 6 national sovereign states"[108](#). A veritable confederation of separation! Such was the program of Ciliga's group, which always put forward, even in the context of such a confederation, the need to construct a Croatian state. It is true that, for once, Ciliga would not have annexed (like in his bulletin in the '60s) Bosnia-Herzegovina to Croatia[109](#)...

At the end of the day the whole of the secret life of Ciliga, that of the underground of the Croat emigration, was that of a Croatian "patriot", marked above all by a "frontist" politics, having broken in practice with his old communist and internationalist convictions.

We can speak of Ciliga as a double-faced Janus figure: nationalist in the Croat emigration and "worldist" in his most public interventions, and also in his memoirs and interviews, as long as he was not concerned with Croatia and Yugoslavia.

Thus, since 1945, Ciliga affirmed that the discovery of atomic energy and the menace of a third world war meant that the order of the day was "world political unification, planetary state organisation". And he added: the birth of a "new political and social movement, conscious and capable of undertaking the new tasks which are incumbent on the human species: world political unification and the construction of the planetary socialist society", internationalism is the order of the day. But it's true that this was to better affirm the necessity for the existence of nations: "the old as well as the new nation states must constitute unity at the base, the egalitarian and autonomous cells of a new synthesis and a new supranational and world unity"[110](#).

These latter citations, show the life of Ciliga in all his ambiguity (Janus) as a person, whether in his youth at the time of the debates on the Croatian national question or since 1938-1940 until his recent death, pensioned by the new Croatian government when he returned to Zagreb after the proclamation of independence.

Many militants and non-militants attached to the internationalist ideal and to the struggle of the working class, that we are told has disappeared, will not forget his intervention - with Marcel Body[111](#) - at the symposium on Kronstadt in Paris in March 1981 where it was a question of international revolution, of the proletariat, of the struggle against all states.

Particularly in the history of the workers' movement, and even in history in general - precisely at the moment where it shows us the bloody bankruptcy of nationalist ideology and the reality of nationalism in Yugoslavia itself - he remains without doubt uniquely the author-witness and militant of the "Country of the Big Lie".

It is in this book that there is condensed the best of the ex-son of the Croatian poor peasants, the son also of the Russian and International Revolution, who had ceased to think for an instant that he was a Croat, in order to be a man without fatherland or nation in a milieu of people who had rejected the nation for the hope of a planetary revolution.

12 December 1992

Philippe Bourrinet

i. **Translator's Note** - both parts of his great work on the Soviet Union, *Au pays du grand mensonge* and *Sibérie, terre de l'exil et l'industrialisation*, were published in English as a single book: *The Russian Enigma*, Ink Links, 1979. At the time of writing this can still be found in many lefty bookshops in the UK. Unlike previous English language publishers, Ink Links did not leave out the politically significant chapter "Lenin, Also". Unfortunately, it has no index - this is a serious crime against the proletariat.[\(return to text\)](#)

ii. **Translator's Note** - This statement is slightly misleading. It's true that the Italian ultra-left, specifically *Bilan*, according to Bourrinet's own pamphlet on the subject, did oppose Trotsky's plan for a Fourth International. The German "left communists", who had already become "council communists", did not feel obliged to take a stand on Trotsky's organisational plans. Unlike Bilan they unequivocally opposed the regime and mode of production which existed in the USSR. Moreover, some of them had attempted to set up their own Fourth International in 1921 when the working class and its revolutionary fractions were much stronger.[\(return to text\)](#)

iii. **Translator's Note** - As should not be surprising, the actual number of dead Serbs is much disputed. Immediately after the Second World War the Titoist authorities proclaimed that 1 million people (overwhelmingly Serbs) had died at Jasenovac alone. This is certainly a wild exaggeration, and one which is popular with Serb nationalists to this day. Croatian nationalists, of course, take the opposite view. Franjo Tuđman (the late President of Croatia), who was a historian before becoming a politician, made a name for himself in the '60s as a sort of Croatian David Irving - claiming that the NDH had murdered tens rather than hundreds of thousands. When he became a successful politician his estimates fell even lower. The real figure will never be known but less partisan (or Partizan) sources seem to agree that it was certainly several hundred thousand.[\(return to text\)](#)

iv. **Translator's Note** - Here Bourrinet seems to avoid the issue of whether Ciliga really had links with the intelligence service of one or more Western states. In view of his later involvement with Croatian nationalist organisations, such as the HNV (see below), which certainly *were* funded by Western intelligence agencies it is not unlikely that he was recruited at some point. The idea that he had already been "turned" by 1942 is not so fanciful. All this raises the possibility that when he associated with the Parisian ultra-left milieu in the 1980s, being accepted despite his known nationalist inclinations, he was doing

so as a spy. Whatever else Ciliga was, he was not a fool. He would have been perfectly capable of talking his way into any scene which he was ordered to infiltrate.[\(return to text\)](#)

Appendix A

Technical Aspects of this Translation

The translation and presentation of this text was not a trivial matter. Despite being primarily an exercise in translating from French to English it also involved lengthy detours into Russian and Serbo-Croat.

Russian personal names, place names and pieces of Russian text, such as the names of publications, were transliterated to the French Latin alphabet in Bourrinet's text. Here they have been transliterated into the English Latin alphabet using the standard convention for this. The only exceptions are well-known personal names whose transliterations are so well established that it would be silly to mess about with them. For example, *Trotsky* should really be *Trotskii*, but it isn't.

In *The Russian Enigma* Yugoslav names are transliterated in various, and not always consistent, ways. For example, Dragić is written as "Draguitch". Here the Yugoslav personal names and names of publications have been written exactly as they are in Serbo-Croat. This seems reasonable because this is the convention for other foreign languages which are written using some form of the Latin alphabet. Often this doesn't happen with Serbo-Croat because publishers, particularly of newspapers, are too lazy to look for fonts which can represent the characters: ć, č, ž, š, đ. In this HTML file we have used the Unicode standard to represent all non-ASCII characters - this is the only way to combine words from Serbo-Croat, French and German in the same text!

The spelling and grammatical mistakes in the Serbo-Croat in Bourrinet's text have been corrected.[\(return to text\)](#)

NOTES

1. *Dix ans au pays du mensonge déconcertant*, éditions Champ libre, Paris, 1977. The title *Au Pays du grand mensonge* was that of the publishing house 10/18, brought out the same year. *Le Monde* on the 14 October 1977 (p. 16) stated that the new 10/18 edition had been stopped at the request of Ciliga. There was an English translation: *The Russian Enigma*, London, Routledge, 1940. In Italian: *Dieci anni dietro il sipario di ferro. 1 - Al paese della menzogna e dell'enigma. 2 - Siberia*, Casini, Rome, 1951. There exists a Castillian Spanish edition, Buenos Aires, 1951; ... and one in Japanese, Tokyo, 1953.[\(return to text\)](#)
2. Ciliga, *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu* ("Alone Through Europe at War"), Paris, 1954, p. 157. Complete edition, *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu (1939-1945)*, "Na pragu sutrašnjice" editions, 586 pages, Rome, 1978.[\(return to text\)](#)
3. This 21 page autobiography was dated 25 May 1983 and entitled simply "Ante Ciliga", without mentioning source or "publisher". It was provided for us by Arfé Marchadier, translator of Korsch into French. It relies a lot - sometimes entirely - on the interview done by Minima and Pier Paolo Poggio in the Italian magazine *L'Umana Avventura* in three parts in January and May 1979, then in January 1980. We would like to thank Arturo Peregalli from the *Laboratorio storico* for having sent us a photocopy.[\(return to text\)](#)
4. *Ante Ciliga*, cited above, p. 2.[\(return to text\)](#)
5. Idem, pp. 3-6, for the period from 1917 and Bolshevism. These points are not developed in the interview in Italian from 1979.[\(return to text\)](#)
6. For the history of the Yugoslav CP see Ivan Avakumović, *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia*, 1964, The Aberdeen University Press; Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, 1968, Columbia University Press, London-New York; Milovan Bosić, *Izvori za istoriju Komunističke partije Jugoslavije (1919-1941)*, "Izdavački centar komunist", Belgrade, 1984. This last book contains a valuable bibliography and cites reprints from the congress and publications of the CP in Yugoslavia, as well as the memoirs of the leaders of the party.[\(return to text\)](#)
7. "Autobiography" in French, op. cit., p. 8.[\(return to text\)](#)

8. There exists a reprint of *Borba* (1922-1923); Izdanje reprint, Belgrade-Zagreb, 1972, 1980. Ciliga himself reproduced certain of his articles from *Borba* on the national question (cf. note infra).[\(return to text\)](#)

9. It is worth noting that the Bosić book, as well as others in Yugoslavia dedicated to Croatian Communism, makes no mention of the name of Ciliga in the central organs of the CPY. This conspiracy of silence is, to say the least, strange and recalls - in the former Yugoslavia of Tito - the methods formerly used in the "Country of the Big Lie".[\(return to text\)](#)

10. Cf. J. Schärf, *La Révolution d'Octobre et le mouvement ouvrier des pays balkaniques*, pp. 206-213, in *La Révolution d'Octobre et le mouvement ouvrier européen*, EDI, Paris, 1967.[\(return to text\)](#)

11. This fraction was led by Grulović. Cf. *Protokoll des ausserordentlichen Parteitage der KAPD vom 11 bis 14.9 1921 in Berlin*, edited and presented by C. Klockner, Verlag für wissenschaftliche Publikationen, Darmstadt, 1986, pp. 16-17.[\(return to text\)](#)

12. Cf. I. Avakumović, op. cit., p. 65. Citation of the "Resolution on the Yugoslav question", in *Quatre premiers congrès mondiaux de l'Internationale communiste*, Maspéro reprint, 1969, pp. 209- 210. (**Translator's Note** - This is available in English as *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, intro. Bertil Hessel, Ink Links (dist. Pluto), London 1980, pp.379-82).[\(return to text\)](#)

13. Cf. *Histoire générale du socialisme*, vol 3, PUF, Paris, 1977.[\(return to text\)](#)

14. Cf. P. Shoup, op. cit., p. 26.[\(return to text\)](#)

15. "Autobiography", op. cit., p. 9.[\(return to text\)](#)

16. This at least was affirmed by Ciliga. Faced with the "Right" of Marković, the "Left", represented by Djuro Cvijić, defended the idea of a federation of workers' and peasants' governments in each national region, once more combining revolutionary and national elements. As we can see, the two wings situated themselves on the nationalitarian terrain where there was no longer a question of class struggle.[\(return to text\)](#)

17. In 1923, Sima Radić published a brochure entitled *Nacionalno pitanje u svetlosti marksizma* ("The National Question in the Light of Marxism"). Ciliga, under the signature "Mbt", reprinted it in *Borba* no. 29, 37, 38, 44, 45, August to December 1923. You can find a reprint of extracts from the paper of Marković and from Ciliga's articles in his review *Na pragu sutrašnjice*, Rome, no. 2-3, August 1974, pp. 253-306, "Sima Marković, Ante Ciliga: polemika o nacionalnom pitanju, 1923 g.". It is interesting to note that while always talking of a "federation of workers' and peasants' governments" - slogan of the Komintern - Ciliga swore that the Serb-Croat quarrel was one between two separate nations and two capitalisms. But he denied that each of those nations could be imperialist in relation to the other.[\(return to text\)](#)

18. "Autobiography", op. cit., p. 10. This nomination occurred at the end of 1923. As for Sima Marković (pseudonym: Semić), he was attacked vigorously by Stalin on 30 March 1925 in the "Yugoslav Commission" of the Executive of the CI, although he based himself on the pamphlet by the very same Stalin of 1912 to justify his position. Cf. *Kongresi i zemaljske konferencije KPJ 1919-1937*, vol. II *Istorijskog arhiva KPJ*, Belgrade, 1950, pp. 421-424.[\(return to text\)](#)

19. Ciliga, "Autobiography", op. cit., p. 11.[\(return to text\)](#)

20. Cf. G. Somai, *Gramsci a Vienna*, Argalia Editore Urbino, 1979. Gramsci, a member of the Vienna Bureau, noted in 1923 that Radić was a cunning politician, skilful, an expert at compromise but incapable of being a strategist (p. 77 and 114). On the other hand, in an article in *Borba*, no. 38, 18 Oct. 1923, Ciliga called for "a united workers' and peasants' front" with the HSS of Radić, whose party was accepted into the Krestintern in 1924.[\(return to text\)](#)

21. For this period, cf. article by Ciliga, "Come Tito si impadroni del partito comunista jugoslavo", in *Corrispondenza Socialista* no. 7, July 1961, pp. 393-399. Reprinted, with an introduction by Paolo Casciola (pp. 1-8), in *Quaderni del Centro Studi Pietro Tresso*, in the series *Studi e Ricerche*, No. 12, February 1989. There also exists an important article by Ciliga on "the role and the fate of Croatian communists in the KPJ" ("Uloga i sudbina hrvatskih komunista u KPJ"), in *Bilten HDSA*, pp. 1-68, no. 67, 1972.[\(return to text\)](#)

22. *Dix ans au pays du mensonge déconcertant*, ed. "Champ Libre", 1977, pp. 22-23.[\(return to text\)](#)

23. "Iles d'Or" editions, Paris, who also publish some texts by Rossi (Tasca), V.

Serge etc.[\(return to text\)](#)

24. Idem, p. 45.[\(return to text\)](#)

25. There existed in the USSR many specialised "communist universities". At the same time, one of the consequences of "Bolshevisation" had been the creation of "communist schools" in all countries.[\(return to text\)](#)

26. Idem, pp. 26-27. For Trotsky's speech, in the name of the Opposition, on 9 December 1926, see *Correspondance internationale* no. 6, 14 January 1927.
[\(return to text\)](#)

27. Idem, p. 31.[\(return to text\)](#)

28. Idem, p. 42.[\(return to text\)](#)

29. Ciliga considered the sessions to be boring, and made up of pure chatter, "where everything is decided behind the scenes". The book by Milovan Bosić, already cited above, mentions (p. 328) as members of the official delegation: J. Zorga, G. Vuković, M. Brezović and A. Hlebec. Under the name of Ragić, the Yugoslav delegation made a speech thanking Bukharin for having liquidated the faction fights in the CPY, pronouncing itself for "a Leninist leadership and an iron discipline", and finally for a Balkan federation of "independent workers' and peasants' republics". No opposition was perceptible. Cf. *Correspondance Internationale* of 4 August 1928 (6th session of 23 July 1928).[\(return to text\)](#)

30. The course towards "armed insurrection" became above all the order of the day on the occasion of the Xth plenary session of July 1929.[\(return to text\)](#)

31. For a brief overview of the period, see Natacha Rajaković, "les ambiguïtés du yougoslavisme", in *De Sarajevo à Sarajevo*, pp. 21-49, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles, October 1992.[\(return to text\)](#)

32. Since the Spring of 1928, the leadership of the Komintern had been preoccupied with the "military question". In Germany, a manual of armed insurrection was put out under the name of Neuberg. Cf. French translation reprinted by Maspéro, Paris, 1970: A. Neuberg, *L'Insurrection armée*. In May 1929, the Politburo of the central committee of the CPY made "armed insurrection" the order of the day. In October 1929 they proclaimed that "it is

necessary to pass from the defensive to the offensive... and prepare the masses and the party for the armed insurrection". Cf. *Pregled istorije Saveza Komunističke Jugoslavije*, Belgrade, 1963, pp. 175-177.[\(return to text\)](#)

33. Cf. Avakumović, op. cit., pp. 94-95.[\(return to text\)](#)

34. A. Ciliga, *Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito*, Denoël, Paris, 1974, p. 165. Avakumović, op. cit., p. 96, gives a figure of 30 dead, less than the number of Yugoslav communists executed by Stalin several years after.[\(return to text\)](#)

35. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (unified) or IMRO(u) in English had been created from the ruins of the Macedonian terrorist movement IMRO in September 1925. The VMRO (its abbreviation in Macedonia-Bulgaria), led by the Macedonian "communists" was a purely nationalist creation. The "historic" IMRO formed the military basis of the Ustaša of Pavelić after 1929.[\(return to text\)](#)

36. Avakumović, op. cit., pp. 108-109.[\(return to text\)](#)

37. Ciliga, *Dix ans au pays...*, pp. 67-68.[\(return to text\)](#)

38. Idem, p. 69.[\(return to text\)](#)

39. Tito's wife, who was of Russian origin and who was arrested in front of him, probably died in prison in 1935. This arrest of an opponent almost cost Tito his life in 1938, for suspicion of "Trotskyism". Of course, Tito never spoke of the arrest of his wife and his complicit silence after it.[\(return to text\)](#)

40. Ciliga, op. cit., p. 105.[\(return to text\)](#)

41. Ibid., p. 115.[\(return to text\)](#)

42. Ibid., p. 87.[\(return to text\)](#)

43. Cf. passage on the relations with Trotsky in 1935-1936.[\(return to text\)](#)

44. Ciliga, idem, p. 110.[\(return to text\)](#)

45. Ibid., p. 179.[\(return to text\)](#)

46. Ciliga also mentions the prisons of Cheliabinsk, Iaroslavl' and Suzdal. In the last of these was the chief "Decist" V. M. Smirnov who was executed in 1937. Otherwise, political prisoners were already in concentration camps at the beginning of the 1930s, without special status. Cf. "Lettre de camarade Ciliga" (9.12.1935), in *A bas la répression contre-révolutionnaire en URSS* (Paris, beginning of 1936 ?, Editions Quatrième Internationale, pp. 6-16).[\(return to text\)](#)

47. The analysis of the balance of political forces at Verkhne- Ural'sk is confirmed by the letter from two orthodox Trotskyists from this prison (T. D. Ardacheliia and G. Ia. Iakovin) to Trotsky, dated 11.11.1930. (in *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* no. 7/8, 1981, pp. 184-193). The "Theses of the three" mentioned by Ciliga for this tendency have been republished by *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* no. 6, under the title "La crise de la Révolution".[\(return to text\)](#)

48. Ciliga, op. cit., p. 288. Solntsev (1900-1936), Iakovin (1896-1938), Dingelstedt (1890-1938) all ended up being shot in the camps, Vorkuta in particular.[\(return to text\)](#)

49. The letter from Iakovin and Ardacheliia, cited above, doesn't mention the edition of *Pravda v tiur'me* from the Trotskyist "centre", but does mention the "right" orthodox edition of *Recueils sur la situation actuelle*. The two signatories of this letter affirm that the *Voinstvuiushchii Bol'shevik* was created in January 1930 by Saakian and Kvachadze. It "was taken in hand by the youth (Pushas, Perevertsev, Emelianov) and oriented itself towards 'Decism', from the second issue".[\(return to text\)](#)

50. Ciliga, op. cit., p. 222.[\(return to text\)](#)

51. For this thesis, see the book by Willy Huhn: *Trotsky - der gescheiterte Stalin* ("Trotsky - the failed Stalin"), Karin Kramer Verlag, Berlin, 1973. French translation and postface by Daniel Saint-James, with a text by Paul Mattick ("Stalinism and Bolshevism"), "Spartacus", Oct.-Nov. 1981, no. 113 - B.[\(return to text\)](#)

52. Ciliga, op. cit., p. 209.[\(return to text\)](#)

53. You can read in a text by Trotsky, published in October 1932, a defence of

the USSR which would make the imprisoned militants scream, and the workers in the prison factories and camps scream even more: "We take the Workers' State as it is and we say: it is our State. Despite everything which remains backward, despite the food shortages, the queues, the mistakes, and even the crimes of the bureaucracy, the workers of the whole world must defend with tooth and nail in this Workers' State their future socialist country". And the former Bolshevik leader added: "Socialism as a system has demonstrated its right to historic victory not in the chapters of *Capital*, but by the practice of hydroelectric power stations and blast furnaces". This theory of capital accumulation, equated with socialism, already set out by Preobrazhensky in *The New Economics*, 1924, (OUP: Oxford, 1964) was defended many a time by Trotsky (for his article from 1932, see *Ecrits 1928-1940*, vol I, Marcel Rivière et Cie, Paris, 1955, p. 111).[\(return to text\)](#)

54. Ciliga, op. cit., pp. 258-259.[\(return to text\)](#)

55. Cf. Roberto Sinigaglia, *Mjasnikov e la rivoluzione russa*, Jaca Book, Milano, 1973.[\(return to text\)](#)

56. For the position of Miasnikov in 1923, see the "Manifesto of the workers' group of the Russian CP (Bolshevik)", published in German translation by the KAPD. French translation in *Invariance*, series II, no. 6, May 1975.[\(return to text\)](#)

57. Cf. Carl Steuermann (the pseudonym of Otto Rühle), *La Crise mondiale ou vers le capitalisme d'Etat*, NRF, Paris, 1932.[\(return to text\)](#)

58. Ciliga, op. cit., p. 285.[\(return to text\)](#)

59. Cf. *Œuvres* de L. Trotsky, vol 8, EDI, Paris, 1980, p. 34. By mistake, P. Broué systematically gives Ciliga's date of birth as 1896 instead of 1898.[\(return to text\)](#)

60. Ibid., pp. 34-36, letter of 2 January 1936.[\(return to text\)](#)

61. Ibid., p. 54, 7 January 1936. We should note that Ciliga was not the only one to leave the USSR in 1935. Arven Davtian, known as Tarov (1895-1943) had given his testimony. He spoke of "life" at Verkhne-Ural'sk, of hunger strikes, of "450" (?) Bolshevik- Leninists and mentioned the activities of three Czechs, in fact Ciliga and his friends. (in *Bulletin d'information et de presse sur*

l'URSS no. 1, January 1936, "D'une lettre de Tarov sur son évacion", pp. 10-12; edited by the SI of the LCI (b - 1.).([return to text](#))

62. Articles by Ciliga: *Biulleten' oppositsii*, no. 47, January 1936, "Stalinskie repressii v SSSR", pp. 1-4; no. 48, February 1936, "v bor'be za vyezd iz SSSR", pp. 11-12; no. 49, April 1936, idem (continued), pp. 7-12. For the Ciliga articles in *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, in 1936 and 1937, see *Tables de la revue russe 'Le Messenger socialiste' 1921-1936*, Paris, Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1992. ([return to text](#))

63. The Trotskyist historian P. Broué writes for example, without citing the positions of the KAPD, Korsch, Miasnikov etc., that "the conception according to which the USSR became 'State capitalism', which was that of Ciliga, was for a long time that of the Mensheviks" (in *Œuvres*, Trotsky, vol 8, p. 65). ([return to text](#))

64. Letter from Trotsky of 22 June 1936, in *Œuvres*, vol 10, EDI, Paris, 1981, pp. 123-125. Trotsky demanded that the "Russian Opposition Bulletin" not publish any more texts by Ciliga, and this despite the qualified opinion of his son. ([return to text](#))

65. This merited Ciliga his "Anglophile" reputation. A new English edition came out in the 1970s. ([return to text](#))

66. *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* no. 7/8, 27 April 1937; no. 11, 12 June. In no. 7/8, Ciliga produces letters which he had sent to *Biulleten' oppozitsii bol'shevik-lenintsev* in August 1936 and April 1937. It stands out in them that he approved of the "ultra-left communists" and said so and was not a "Bolshevik- Leninist" but was "not organised". He wanted to work for "the creation of a single front of oppositional communists, socialists and anarchists against the Stalinist bureaucratic terror" (p. 24). This position of calling for a single front showed, on the contrary, that he was moving further and further away from the classic positions of Left Communism, one of whose characteristics was the rejection of all fronts. ([return to text](#))

67. *Nova Evropa* was a journal appearing since the beginning of the '20s, where "intellectuals" expressed themselves as partisans of Yugoslav national unity. In 1938, Ciliga sent an article in which he affirmed that the war would not happen shortly. Cf. Ciliga, *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu*, Paris, 1954, p. 6. ([return to text](#))

68. No. 278, 10.9.1938, "L'insurrection de Cronstadt et la destinée de la Révolution russe".[\(return to text\)](#)

69. A so-called "committee of Yugoslav journalists in exile", affirmed in a tract in French (Paris, 22 April 1952) that: "While Ciliga was in Soviet Russia he was excluded from the (Yugoslav) Party under the double accusation of having belonged to a Trotskyist group and of having worked for the Yugoslav secret police. Thrown in prison by the Soviets, he was got out by the Italian consul to Moscow in 1937. By what sort of haggling the Italian consul succeeded in freeing Ciliga is a secret still guarded by the Kremlin. Once free, Ciliga entered Yugoslavia where he lived under the protection of the police. Following this, he installed himself in Italy and shuttled back and forth between Rome and Paris as an agent of the OVRA (political police of Mussolini)." The key to this tract (BDIC, Nanterre, Q pièce 7230) can be found in the conclusion: "Ciliga slandered the Serbs and the orthodox religion". If this committee of "journalists" were good "Titoists", it shows that the "Titoism" glorified by Trotskyism after 1948 was worthy of Stalinism.[\(return to text\)](#)

70. "... I take full and complete responsibility for the repression of the Kronstadt revolt". Text by Trotsky, in *Quatrième internationale*, August 1938. Again in the book *V.Serge et L. Trotsky. La lutte contre le stalinisme*, texts presented by Michel Dreyfus, Maspéro, Paris, 1977, pp. 213-216.[\(return to text\)](#)

71. Reprint of the Ciliga text, Editions Allia, Paris, 1983; citation pp. 16-17.
[\(return to text\)](#)

72. Ciliga, *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu*, 1954, pp. 13-20, on Miasnikov. The review of Maslov, January 1939, no. 1 - *Cahiers d'Europe - Europäische Monatshefte* - published a text by Ciliga, "les maîtres du Pays", pp. 29-33.[\(return to text\)](#)

73. Unpublished "Autobiography", p. 14.[\(return to text\)](#)

74. Ibid., p. 14.[\(return to text\)](#)

75. *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu*, Rome, 1978, part II, "u balkanskom vrtlogu: tri godina u NDH" ("in the Balkan whirlpool: three years in the NDH").[\(return to text\)](#)

76. For the framework of events, see: L. Hory and M. Broszat, *Der Kroatische*

Ustacha-Staat (1941-1945), "Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte Nummer 8", Stuttgart, 1964. K. Meneghello-Dincić, *L'Etat 'oustacha' de Croatie (1941- 1945)*, in *Revue d'histoire de la II Guerre mondiale* no. 74, April 1966. F. Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941-1945*, Zagreb, 1977. For the role (far from glorious) of the Vatican and the Catholic Church, cf. H. Lauriere, *Assassins au nom de Dieu*, 1951, Paris, "La Vigie".[\(return to text\)](#)

77. Of the 1.7 million killed in the war, two thirds were the victims of other Yugoslavs. For Dalmatia, which had become Italian, O. Talpo, *Dalmazia: una cronaca per la storia (1941)*, Rome, 1985. It emerged from German reports that the 40,000 rail workers of Croatia were pro-Communist, that the peasants (80% of the population) were hostile to the Ustaša regime, that the "muslims" of Bosnia - the "flower of the Croat nation" according to Pavelić - were won over to the "partisanism" of Tito.[\(return to text\)](#)

78. The same tract already cited above affirmed that Ciliga "followed Pavelić on his triumphant march" towards Croatia. One more lie. What is true is that someone of the same name was a member of the Pavelić team. Cf. the "memoirs" of an old top functionary of the Ustaša State: V. Vrancić, *Branili smo Državu* ("We defended the state" (*sic*)), index vol II; Knjižnica Hrvatske Revije, Barcelona - Munich, 1985. Another homonym, that of Ante Pavelić: a member of the Serbo-Croatian Coalition of 1919, which constituted the provisional government of the provinces of the Southern Slavs, must not be confused with the leader of the Ustaša movement.[\(return to text\)](#)

79. "Autobiography", p. 15.[\(return to text\)](#)

80. This version can be found in the interview with Ciliga, in *L'Umana Avventura* no. 9, January 1980, p. 38.[\(return to text\)](#)

81. Cf. R. Trivunčić, *Jasenovac i jasenovački logori* ("Jasenovac and the camps of Jasenovac"), Jasenovac, 1974.[\(return to text\)](#)

82. The tract already cited affirms that it was the Gestapo who demanded the arrest of Ciliga as an agent of the OVRA, and that the Archbishop of Zagreb, Stepinac, got him out of prison (while Ciliga was in an extermination camp). Amongst other things, Ciliga was denounced by the mysterious "committee of Yugoslav journalists" as being "the leader-writer of the Ustaša journals *Spremnost* (an imitation of the journal 'Das Reich' of Goebbels) and *Hrvatski*

Narod"; that starting in February 1943 "he never ceased to glorify the participation of the 'Independent State of Croatia' in the war effort against the Allies and the Yugoslav guerillas". The consultation of these reviews and journals in the archives in Zagreb should allow these accusations to be demolished. This much is sure, all Ciliga's political ambiguity during the war gave flesh to such allegations. As for the Archbishop Stepinac - who became a cardinal in 1956, although Tito had imprisoned him in 1946 for 16 years - he had an equivocal attitude during the Ustaša period, but gave individual support to persecuted Serbs, Jews and Croats, which is different from Archbishop Sarić of Sarajevo who was openly Ustaša.[\(return to text\)](#)

83. Ciliga, *Deset godina u Sovjetskoj Rusiji* ("Ten years in Soviet Russia"), Zagreb, 1943; collection of articles reprinted in the review *Spremnost*.[\(return to text\)](#)

84. Citation extracted from the Jelić-Butić book, op. cit., p. 273.[\(return to text\)](#)

85. *Hrvatski Narod* was a large-circulation daily which came out twice a day. Like all the other papers it was controlled by the new Ustaša authorities.[\(return to text\)](#)

86. Ciliga, *štorice iz proštime* - on his travels in 1941- 1942 across Dalmatia, Bosnia and Croatia - "Matica Hrvatska" editions, Zagreb, 1944.[\(return to text\)](#)

87. Ciliga, *Sam kroz Evropu u ratu*, 1978, Rome, 3rd part: "u Beču, Berlinu i Bavarskoj".[\(return to text\)](#)

88. Cf. Ciliga, *Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito*, p. 145. Ciliga refused to leave for this congress. He recounts that after September 1944, during the purification of the Ustaša state, he was sought out by the Gestapo in Zagreb. As for the tract mentioned, it stated that "Ciliga was named as cultural attaché from the 'Independent State of Croatia' to Berlin where he remained until the defeat of Hitler". No proof or testimony allows any reality to be given to this accusation.[\(return to text\)](#)

89. Ciliga, *Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito*, pp. 144-145. Cf. "Autobiography" pp. 16 also.[\(return to text\)](#)

90. Ciliga, *Lénine et la Révolution*, Cahiers mensuels Spartacus, Paris, January

1948. Without doubt written in 1938.[\(return to text\)](#)

91. Editions les Iles d'Or, 1952, and not 1950 as indicated in the "Autobiography".[\(return to text\)](#)

92. Edizioni Jaca Book, Milan, 1983.[\(return to text\)](#)

93. "Autobiography", p. 17.[\(return to text\)](#)

94. *Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito*, p. 146.[\(return to text\)](#)

95. Ciliga, *Dokle će hrvatski narod stenjati pod srpskim jarmom?*, subtitled: "Diskusija o suvremenim problemima hrvatske politike". Paris, Christmas 1952.
[\(return to text\)](#)

96. Ciliga, "Les Slaves du Sud déchirés entre l'Est et l'Ouest", in *Révolution prolétarienne*, November 1950. It stated that "the crisis of Serb hegemony is the central kernel of the situation in Yugoslavia today" (underlined by Ciliga himself).[\(return to text\)](#)

97. Maček (1879-1964) left memoirs in the English language (1957): *Struggle for Freedom*, New York, 1957.[\(return to text\)](#)

98. Ciliga, *Dokle će hrvatski narod stenjati pod srpskim jarmom?*, already cited, p. 81. We should note that in this pamphlet there can be found more than dubious formulations about the Ustaša movement. He always emphasises that the politics of Pavelić had led to catastrophe, through an "unreal anti-Serb chauvinism" - but is it just a question of "chauvinism" when 600,000 Serbs are massacred? or of "enslavement to Italy and Germany"? He wrote: "Despite all this, Pavelić and the Ustaše accomplished a fundamentally positive role in the history of the Croatian people." (p. 40) Here, Ciliga was no longer able to deny his compromise with the Ustaše.[\(return to text\)](#)

99. Ciliga, "Nacionalizam i komunizam u hrvatsko-srpskom sporu" ("Nationalism and communism in the Serb-Croat dispute"), *Hrvatska Revija*, no. 4, pp. 365-396, March 1951. This article was the same as that which appeared in the Rome journal *Libertà*, serialised in March. The review was run by Antun Bonifacić and Vinko Nikolić, close to - if not in - the Ustaša movement.[\(return to text\)](#)

100. To find your way a little in the nebulous mass of Croatian emigrants which goes from extreme right Ustaša to pro-Moscow Croatian national-communism, cf. Stephen Clissold, *Croat Separatism: Nationalism, Dissidence and Terrorism*, no. 103, January 1979 of *Conflict Studies*, a British journal. For a description of the émigré Croatian press, on all continents, cf. *Hrvatska Revija*, "Jubilarni Zbornik 1951-1975", Munich- Barcelona, 1976, pp. 358-369. Ivan Jelić edited an *HNO Bulletin* in Munich. His brother, Branko Jelić - who edited *Hrvatska Država* - was, to the contrary, pro-Soviet, calling for Croatian independence in return for giving bases to the Soviet Union.[\(return to text\)](#)

101. Cf. Bilten HDSA no. 37-38, 1965, p. 10 (letter to Branko Jelić).[\(return to text\)](#)

102. Stephen Clissold, op. cit., p. 8. Also, *Hrvatska Revija*, op. cit., p. 368. Ciliga's various journals are also mentioned (p. 358).[\(return to text\)](#)

103. Cf. thesis of D. S. Stefanović, *Les Origines de la crise Croate de 1971*, EHSS, June 1979.[\(return to text\)](#)

104. *Na pragu sutrašnjice*, no. 5, December 1975, pp. 129- 144.[\(return to text\)](#)

105. Stephen Clissold, op. cit., p. 17. This went from the Ustaša HOP (Croatian Liberation Movement) to the young refugees from the so-called "Croatian Spring" of 1971, by way of the HSS (peasant party), the HRS (republican party) and the Socialist and Communist (Kominformist) parties. According to the author, the HNV condemned terrorist violence while giving moral and financial support to arrested Croatian terrorists.[\(return to text\)](#)

106. Ciliga, *Crise d'Etat dans la Yougoslavie de Tito*, Denoël, Paris, 1974, p. 344. (Italian version in 1972).[\(return to text\)](#)

107. This search for a "united front" of all the Croatian political parties from the Right to the Left, can be found in the activities of Ciliga in the HNV, where splits were growing between Ustaša, "republicans", "socialists". In no. 13 (Nov. 1979) of *Na pragu sutrašnjice*, pp. 157-158, Ciliga - faced with the "current crisis of the HNV" - calls for a pluralist politics with the "old nationalists", the "young nationalists", the members of the peasant party HSS and the "Croatian Communists with a democratic and national orientation".[\(return to text\)](#)

108. Ciliga, *Izjava Petnaestovice. - Konac Titove Jugoslavije i zadaci Hrvatske Politike* ("Declaration of the fifteen. - the end of Tito's Yugoslavia and the tasks of Croatian politics"), Lund (Sweden), 10 July 1983; pamphlet.[\(return to text\)](#)

109. The first numbers of *Bilten HDSA*, in 1963-64, showed a map of Europe on the cover, with Croatia (indicated in black) encompassing Croatia in the strict sense and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as between 1941 and 1945.[\(return to text\)](#)

110. "Autobiography", pp. 20-21. In the same sense of a call for world community, you can also read in his book on Tito's Yugoslavia, op. cit., p. 208: "Internationalism and universalism are the concretisation of human solidarity, the indispensable base for realising world unification and the future socialist society".[\(return to text\)](#)

111. Marcel Body (1894-1984) wrote a book based on his experience of Bolshevik Russia, before he returned to France and became an anarchist and pacifist: *Un piano en bouleau de Carélie. - Mes années de Russie 1917-1927*, Hachette, 1981.[\(return to text\)](#)