

Introduction to the unofficial translation of “Marxist Politics and Federalist Politics” by Altiero Spinelli, 1942-1943

This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first English translation of Altiero Spinelli’s essay “*Marxist Politics and Federalist Politics*. ”

We undertook this work not as professional translators, but as readers deeply engaged with Spinelli’s political thought and its continued relevance. Given the urgency of the debates he raises — between Marxist and federalist approaches to social and political change — we felt it necessary to make this text available without waiting for an official translation. We nonetheless hope that, in time, a professional translation will follow.

In preparing this version, we have sought to stay as close as possible to Spinelli’s original words. When a literal translation produced an awkward or unclear result in English, we made careful adjustments to preserve both the meaning and spirit of the original. We used some of the current AI technologies currently available online to help us, but we revised the text and had it subsequently double checked by other federalist friends.

We have also added explanatory notes to illuminate certain historical and political references that may not be immediately familiar to non-Italian or non-European readers. Additionally, we occasionally included brief clarifications in brackets — for example, original Italian terms or names following their English translation — to provide context and precision.

Our aim is that this translation will allow readers to engage more deeply with Spinelli’s reflections on the differences between Marxism and federalism, and to appreciate their enduring relevance to contemporary political thought. We also hope that this text will disprove certain mystifications and misconceptions that have recently come out in the public discourse on Spinelli’s thought.

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MARXIST POLITICS AND FEDERALIST POLITICS

I. — MARXIST DOGMA.

Marxist doctrine presented itself at its inception with the claim of being a scientific doctrine. After lengthy debates after the end of the last century, during the so-called “crisis of Marxism,” this claim was completely demolished, and it was recognized that, however much it possessed fragments of scientific knowledge, this theory could in no way sustain itself.

Nevertheless, it remained standing as a practical doctrine, as an orientation in political action. In this form it has had, and still has, much hold on minds; and all modern progressive tendencies, even if they do not refer directly to it, nevertheless hardly succeed in setting their actions and perspectives independently of Marxism. Having abandoned the pretension of being science, it has stiffened into a great, hard religious dogma, which has its interested priests, its unbelieving but hypocritical obsequious followers, willing to admire everything that is accepted by the vulgar and that presents itself as mystical and crude belief, indulging in it out of a kind of intellectual masochism. It would not be difficult to indicate on a case-by-case basis to which category each movement or individual who gives reverence to it belongs.

Marxist dogma can be summarized thus:

In today’s society, the fundamental contrast that directly or indirectly influences all other social phenomena, and determines the general lines of its development, is the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The fundamental interest of the bourgeoisie consists in maintaining the ownership of the means of production, while the fundamental interest of the proletariat lies in the abolition of that ownership

and the collectivization of all material means of production. The victory of either side therefore implies the maintenance of private property (the capitalist regime) or its abolition (the communist regime). But the development of capitalism increases more and more the numerical strength of the proletariat and its class consciousness, while on the other hand it leads to the ever-increasing concentration of production in a few hands, so that with each new crisis the victory of the proletariat and the consequent establishment of communism become more likely. Collectivist society, though a necessary product of historical development and not of an expressed desire to make a better type of society than the previous one, nevertheless abolishes all presently existing evils and creates the conditions for a higher and freer human life.

What makes it so difficult to induce believers in this dogma to subject it to criticism is the idea that there is a higher force which will bring men to their ultimate salvation, even though they are neither deserving nor capable of it. This is the way in which men, when they have not yet attained the full consciousness that their future depends essentially on their own industriousness, when they are still unsure of themselves and the values they affirm, try to infuse themselves with strength and courage, persuading themselves that they are working for something more divine; that they are serving a higher providential plan. *Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?* [if God is for us, who can be against us?] — The propagandistic force of such formulations on simple minds is enormous; and it is this mystical guise that has greatly contributed to the popularity of Marxism

In reality, however, when one says to work in the service of a higher force, one is simply saying, in a most emphatic and encouraging way, that one means to work in a certain sense. If one strips this dogma of its mystical veil and examines it for what it really is, that is, for a decision to march toward a given goal by employing certain means, one can restate it in the following more comprehensible way:

Marxism is a particular socialist tendency that: (1) believed it identified the evil of modern society, to which all others would tend to be reduced, in the institution of

capitalist property; (2) accepted from the so-called utopian socialists the formula that the type of society that would eliminate these evils is the collectivist society; (3) believed it identified in the class struggle the field in which the victory of socialism will be decided, and in the proletariat the force that will be capable of sustaining and leading the socialists to victory. And this analysis, this goal and this means have been fused into a mystical formula with suggestive propaganda effects.

But what if it turns out that the proletariat does not have this capacity? That collectivism does not lead to workers' emancipation? That the fundamental evils of society are not embodied in the capitalist regime?

These questions are not mere qualms of conscience, but impose themselves on every serious socialist who meditates on the experiences of our generation. The value of any practical orientation lies in its fruits; and since the opening of the revolutionary epoch still in progress with World War I, movements oriented according to Marxist ideology have gone through an inexorable series of defeats and failures. Without exception. In some countries, struggles of a non-economic nature have pushed the economic struggles of a class into second or third place. In others, these economic struggles have not arranged themselves at all according to the patterns postulated by Marxism, and the meddling of other classes in the self-styled fundamental struggle have upset everything. In others the proletariat has been the strongest but has shown no intention of seriously wanting to achieve collectivism. In one country collectivism has been achieved, but it has not shown any of those characteristics of superior human life that it should have had.

Such is how things stand for Marxism — and they do indeed stand thus — we should look forward to socialists divided into two distinct parties.

On the one hand, there are the traditionalist socialists, who, with admirable lack of imagination, cannot even conceive that we can proceed differently, make the socialist orientation coincide with Marxist dogma, and, though beaten, humiliated and

scattered, return to rearrange their ranks again and again with the same criteria, hope that the lost opportunities will come again, and prepare to accomplish again what they have done in the past. They deny the most obvious facts, they want to keep their faith and use their reason not to meditate, but to devise lawyerly reasons that can persuade them to stay on the same path. The reader can well understand that these loyalists will make excellent ostriches but do socialism a very disservice. To the extent that they have considerable political influence tomorrow, the result of their action would be yet another failure.

On the other hand, there are the unscrupulous socialists, who realize that socialism and Marxism do not coincide. They know that to be a socialist is to recognize that in today's society economic forces operate in such a way as to create privileges based on wealth, and to exclude the working classes from participating in the work and fruits of modern civilization, and it means seriously proposing to change this state of affairs. They intend that the instrument which should serve to satisfy collective needs, that is, the state, be used in such a way that economic forces do not dominate men but, as is the case with natural forces, are subdued by them, guided, controlled in the most rational way, so that the broad masses do not fall victim to them. Collectivism and class struggle are not ends to which needs tend by their intrinsic value; they are respectively mere legal institutions and mere social forces, which have the pure value of means to that end. If they are inadequate means, they must be modified or different ones sought.

Traditionalist socialists will naturally accuse unscrupulous socialists of no longer being socialists, of being traitors, etc.; and they will be right in a sense, for unscrupulousness is always a betrayal of torpid traditionalism. We intend to stand on the side of the unscrupulous socialists, and subject the problems of socialist revolution to critical examination, in order to be better prepared for the probable eventualities, and more aware of what is to be achieved and how to achieve it

It should be noted that no one refuses in principle to undertake such an investigation; however, as soon as one begins it, one notices that senses of irritation and a covert resistance to proceeding further arise in the listeners. Pretexts, empty words, and unreasoning are accumulated. One insults the expositor in every way, in the secret hope that he will cease to disturb the sweet stillness of the spirit.

The fact is that from our listener we demand some rather difficult things. We demand that he not assume without fail that a way is good and fruitful, just because many hold it, because it has been taught as good, because those closest to it affirm it; that he not reduce the task of reason to that of going accepting sophistical arguments of doubtful value, in order to give himself and others to believe that a solution is good, when it is bad; who knows how to silence his own prejudices and not continually retract his brain with them; who is ready to evaluate political forces and men for what they are actually worth and not for what we would like them to be worth; who is willing to compare dreams with reality and, in case of contrast, to deny those and not this. Such spiritual attitudes are much easier to demand from others than to have them and make use of them. However, striving on our own account to be unprejudiced and realistic, we take the liberty of asking our readers to be as unprejudiced and realistic as they can be. Is that too much to ask?

II. — THE EVILS OF PRESENT SOCIETY.

According to Marxism, the evils of present society tend to be understood in one fundamental one: the exploitation of the working class by capitalists. Marx was well aware that there were many other evils, but he believed he could show that capitalism tends to become the only form of economic life, and therefore to make all other evils, survivals of past ages, vanish, transforming them all in these terms: the workers produce more than they get as wages, and this surplus goes into the hands of the capitalists, who concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer people. This can be radically remedied only by transferring capital to the community, so that that surplus also remains in the hands of the community and is used for its benefit.

Closer examination showed, however, that this analysis of the wealth problem was inaccurate, and that there were other evils that did not boil down to this at all. Let us examine these two points separately.

It is true that capitalist society is so made that the surplus over the goods consumed by the workers in a given period remains as a whole in the hands of the capitalists; but it should be added that this surplus is divided into two parts: one part that is consumed by the capitalists themselves and another that is simply accumulated and reinvested in production.

The evil does not lie in the allocation of this second part. For with it capitalists do not subtract anything, since they return in production what they have retained. One can imagine a form of society in which the function of saving is entrusted not to individuals, but to the state. Even the socialist society, however, would have to take a part of the goods produced away from the consumption of the workers and reinvest it (1); it would only remain to be seen whether it is more convenient to entrust this function to private individuals or to the state. This is a technical problem that changes nothing to the substance of things.

The evil is therefore not here. It is in the part that the capitalists consume to satisfy their voluptuous needs, while the working classes can barely meet the needs that, given the demands of our civilization, are more urgent. If we pay close attention, we see that the evil does not lie in the fact that there are capitalists and proletarians, owners of instruments of production and sellers of labor-power. The evil lies in the fact that there are rich (whether capitalist or not) or poor (whether wage laborers or not). In capitalist, market-based society, one does not satisfy the needs felt to be most urgent, nor those that a given criterion of civilization dictates as most urgent. One satisfies those needs that can be best paid for. All production is arranged so as to satisfy first and foremost those needs that can be best paid for. All production is arranged so as to satisfy first

¹ This was also noted by Marx, who in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* [*Critica al programma di Gotha*] rejected as absurd the formula of socialism as an allotment to each of the entire product of his labor.

and foremost the needs of the richest, and secondly, and increasingly incompletely, the needs of the poorest. On the other hand, the rich, just because they are rich, have an advantage in getting a better education and occupying higher positions. The poor have a much narrower circle of opportunities, whatever their abilities, just because they are poor.

This state of affairs is bad for anyone who wants the field of free choices to be made as equal as possible for men in order to allow the greatest possible development of their personalities. The poor, that is, in general, the workers (blue-collar or not) and their families have in the present arrangement of society far less than they would be entitled to under the demands of our ideals of civilization. In this consists, where it is sharply formulated, the problem of exploitation.

Marx would probably accept this formulation, but would add that all historical development leads to society being divided only into proletarians and capitalists, and that therefore the contrast between rich and poor tends practically to coincide with the contrast between bourgeoisie and proletariat. This assertion is gratuitous, however. Such an inescapable law of simplification does not exist. We shall not spend a single word to prove its falsity, for, for those who are capable of observing facts and following reasoning, it is now crystal clear, and for those who make acts of faith, reasoning and observation are perfectly useless. We will only say that the most intelligent among Marxists, that is, communists, while continuing to preach Marxist dogma, have long since understood that the term *poor workers* does not coincide with the term *proletarians*, and no longer dream, for example, of confusing the needs of peasants with those of workers.

This being the case on this point, let us clearly fix that the task of the socialists cannot be to provide for the solution of the workers' problem, trusting that then they will automatically solve that of other workers as well; but to provide for the solution of the problem of misery in all its various forms, of which that of workers' misery is only one aspect, however of considerable importance.

The problem of the misery of the working classes arises insofar as our society has developed immense productive forces, such as to permit a general improvement in the living conditions of the broad masses; insofar as our criteria of civilization demand that these possibilities for improvement become a reality; and insofar as the existing social order hinders the realization of these demands.

But in today's society there is also another complex of evils that manifest themselves in gigantic contradictions, which from time to time erupt by halting the process of wealth production, destroying accumulated wealth, wasting resources for unproductive purposes, and paralyzing the whole of social life in an increasingly serious way. These are economic marasmus and wars. An order in the grip of such convulsions becomes impoverished and continually threatens ruin.

These evils destroy the very premise of the previous problem, for it is clear that the problem of misery can be solved only on the condition of maintaining a high level of production and wealth. If it melts away to general marasmus or impoverishment, any solution becomes illusory.

Marxists have dealt with these evils a great deal, but they have failed to make an exact analysis of them, and as a result have never even managed to formulate adequate remedies. Economic marasmus and imperialism are regarded as mere consequences of the capitalist order. Capitalism causes, because of the "anarchy of production," periodic and increasingly violent economic crises. Moreover, it is by its very nature induced more and more to operate states in order to make them conduct imperialistic policy in order to achieve the highest profits. However, Marxists have never been able to demonstrate this necessary link between a system in which there is private property on the one hand, and economic chaos and imperialism on the other.

Capitalism has, yes, periodic fluctuations due to breaks in equilibrium; but it is in no way possible to prove that they must become more and more ruinous until they completely paralyze the whole productive organism. Rosa Luxemburg attempted to

demonstrate this. But the attempt failed and was rejected by the great majority of socialists, even Marxists, who, if they continue to use such theses in their petty propaganda, it is only because in fact this growing marasmus is one of the characteristics of our epoch, and they want to use the resentments it provokes to the advantage of their struggle for the establishment of collectivism. The crises of capitalism are simply crises of readjustment of balances; and even in a collectivist society there would be, whenever wrong plans were made or mistakes were made in their execution, or circumstances arose that were unforeseeable at the time the plans were formed. These crises, however, have nothing to do with the economic marasmus that affects our society.

Equally failed must be the attempt to show that imperialism is a direct consequence of capitalism (2). Yet economic marasmus and imperialism are such disastrous phenomena that socialists must strive to pinpoint their causes precisely, under pain of seeing their fundamental purpose irreparably frustrated.

No study of these phenomena can be found in Marx. He lived at a time when they were generally believed to be remnants of the *anciens régimes* and in the process of disappearing. Marx was concerned only with the general evils of capitalism as a whole, and not with those due to sectional interests. This generic concept of “capitalism” as the cause of all evils then greatly harmed the Marxists, who had in that concept an inadequate instrument of inquiry for understanding the phenomenon of sectionalism.

Far from disappearing, sectionalism has instead become the predominant feature of our age. Sectionalism arises from the fact that there is no automatic and spontaneous harmony between particular interests and the general needs of a certain type of civilization. In order for these demands to assert themselves, general rules must always be established that set the limits within which particular interests can be expressed, and that are accompanied by sufficient force to be respected. If the particularistic forces of

² See a comprehensive critique of Marxist theories of imperialism in: ROBBINS, *The Economic Causes of War* [*La causa economica della guerra*].

individuals or groups succeed in breaking these general rules and in fact imposing others, in which the particular interests of those individuals or groups are exclusively taken into account, overwhelming the rest of society, thus damaging and emptying the form of civilization, we have the phenomenon of “sectionalism.”

The two fields in which it manifests itself most vigorously in our time are the economic field within each state, and the international political field.

In the economic field there are indeed a number of interests that can be more advantageously satisfied if by concerted action they succeed in abolishing competition.

There are commodities that naturally lend themselves to monopolization, such as certain mining products concentrated in very few areas, railroads, hydroelectric power plants, etc.

There are cases where producers of certain goods manage to agree to sell at higher prices by eliminating competition through force—especially through the force of the state. When the state puts up a protective duty, or prohibits the import of a commodity, or prohibits the immigration of foreign labor, or encourages the formation of a monopolistic consortium, hindering competition by legal expedients (industrial patents, banking privileges, etc.) or even prohibiting “savages” from entering the market — in all these cases it creates or encourages the creation of privileged positions of monopolistic exploitation.

The enormous majority of modern trusts, cartels, unions, have this origin. They do not come from the fact that production has become naturally centralized in a few hands, because of the possibility of cost reductions dependent on the expansion of the enterprise, or because of the existence of natural conditions that with a given technique prevent competition. They come instead from the fact that production has been centralized and competition abolished by measures of force.

The syndicate — to use the most general term embracing all such monopolies or artificial quasi-monopolies — is an organism which, in order to function, must be able to compel its members not to cheat by selling too cheaply, and must be able to prevent other competitors from coming in from outside. To comply with this, it must have such strength and influence that it can achieve only by using the authority of the state to serve itself.

Marx had seen the state as the representative and enforcer of the collective interests of the bourgeoisie. This could perhaps be argued with a semblance of reason a century ago. But for a while now the state has ceased to be this executive committee, albeit only of the bourgeoisie, but nonetheless of its *general* interests. These interests would consist in the guarantee of as free a market as possible, as large a market as possible, and when as free from monopolistic situations as possible. Instead, the modern state has increasingly become the representative and enforcer of those particular sectional interests that are strong enough or insidious enough to force it to bend to their will and place its power at their particular service. And these interests can be as much of particular bourgeois groups (which is seen, for example, when the currency is deliberately devalued) or of particular labor groups (anti-immigration policy) or of bourgeois groups allied to labor groups (e.g., protectionist policy).

In the international arena, sectional politics manifests itself in the form of imperialism. In previous cases we have encountered sectional interests that should have been legally subject to the authority of the state in the collective interest while actually succeeding in imposing their particular will on the state. The protagonists of international politics — sovereign states — are not even legally subject to a higher sovereignty. The supreme task of the state is to win and keep the most advantageous positions for itself, without any regard for the interests of others. The interests it upholds may be the interests of some particular groups that prevail in its territory or special interests of the entire geographical group. For the problem we now consider, however, it does not matter whether it is the one case or the other, since, in any case, the state defends them against the foreigner as its special interests. To conduct such a policy also requires the

use of force; but it is not a question here of hoarding a superior force for one's service. There is only to arm oneself, to impose by war the rule that establishes one's own privilege, politically subjugating another country, making it tributary, reserving colonial markets, reducing whole peoples to the state of slavery, etc. Imperialism is but the grandest manifestation of sectional politics.

What are the developments and consequences of sectionalism? When a group succeeds in establishing a monopolistic privilege in one of the ways mentioned, the result is that it changes the terms of exchange in its favor, that is, it succeeds in making more of the total income of the community flow to its own advantage than it otherwise could. The cartel that raises prices, the workers who close off access to their trade, the immigration to their country, the protected industry, the country that grabs a colony and exploits it, end up better off, to the detriment of the remaining part of the community. The sense of justice, if there is any (3), may feel offended, but the whole mechanism of economic life does not stop because of this: it marches on.

However, when any one group succeeds in imposing such a situation to its own advantage, it prompts other groups to correct the harm done by following the same policy. And once this process is set in motion, it is increasingly difficult to stop it on the inclined plane that then leads to the division of society into a number of feuding baronies. The relationship in which exchanges take place is no longer automatically determined by the play of competition, but becomes determinable through the strength that such a complex has in the face of such another. Production decreases. The cost of risks increases enormously as outlets suddenly open or close. Crises become catastrophic and increasingly prolonged. Economic life ceases to be a peaceful occupation. It becomes the field of continuous overpowering of this or that party. The easiest way out of this welter is the way of the intervention of a higher authority that establishes with a totalitarian regime the relations between the various groups, consolidating the privileges acquired.

³ There may not be. One may think that such industry or such class or such country or such race has superior rights, and then the soul is at peace with itself.

Sectionalism in the economic life of individual countries, by hindering trade, makes the friction between country and country much more serious, and energetically pushes toward a policy of militarism and imperialism the sovereign states, which already by their nature are inclined to concern themselves with nothing but their own particular national interests. The totalitarian solution brings this tendency to a climax, for by subjecting the whole of economic life to state power, on the one hand it entrusts to it the whole task of forcibly obtaining positions of privilege over other countries, and on the other hand it makes it all the more capable of preparing for total war. If from the welter of international life a solution can be glimpsed, this seems to consist only in the establishment of the empire of the strongest state over its other vassal remnants.

The reader will have noticed that in this brief exposition of the evils of sectionalism we are writing not possible developments of the future that could always be considered problematic, but the present situation of our civilization. People keep referring to modern society as a capitalist society. But if one understands well what a capitalist society is — and it is enough to send, if nothing else, to Marx's definition — if by this word one does not mean the Manichean principle of evil, applying it therefore wherever evils are encountered, one must say that today we live in a society which has a capitalist background that is receding more and more, but which is essentially a syndicalist society. That this syndicalism is largely geographic (a system of sovereign states) and masterly, and not all proletarian, is of no importance with respect to the social marasmus, which arises from the clash between conflicting groups, concerned only with sectional interests, and not with the way in which gains are distributed within the groups themselves.

So, if we recapitulate the evils of today's society, we must say that they can be summarized:

- 1) In the evil of the privilege of wealth that is peculiar to capitalism, in which opportunities to fashion a life for oneself according to one's inclinations are correlative to the wealth possessed.

2) In the evil of sectionalisms peculiar to the syndicalist regime, in which a law imposing the general guidelines of civilization is absent, or is lacking, and individual groups conquer and maintain privileges by force, causing the general marasmus and impoverishment characteristic of all feudal eras.

The second evil could be cured while leaving the first intact. Just think of how some aspects of it were cured in Europe (abolition of the privileges of guilds, of “free cities,” of the nobility, etc.) and in America (abolition of the sectionalism of the thirteen states in the North American federation) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries-when the issue of the privilege of wealth was left absolutely intact.

The evil of poverty, on the other hand, cannot in any way be solved unless the evil of sectionalism is solved.

The latter is in fact the most serious. Its harms are infinitely greater than those caused by the former. Suffice it to say that disasters of the kind of the economic crisis of ‘29 go directly back to sectionalism, and that the economic factors that contributed most to the maturation of the two world wars are sectional economic policy factors.

The conditions of the working classes cannot be improved if the marasmus of sectionalism remains standing or is reconstituted, or perhaps strengthened. Particular groups of workers may obtain good wages in a country; but this is at the expense of other labor groups; and the advantage will be partly or wholly nullified by the protectionisms which in turn will obtain the industrialists. Peasants may obtain land, but they will derive little benefit as a result of the high prices that industries will impose for their products. Social benefits may be increased for the benefit of workers, but any benefit will be nullified by the necessities of war.

There is more. A struggle against poverty, which does not also fully address sectionalism in its most deleterious aspects, but goes around it hoping that it will automatically resolve itself, will itself inevitably take the form of a sectional struggle,

aggravating this evil and ultimately frustrating its own aims. An oppressed class fighting for its own exclusive class interests may gain transitory advantages, but it does not march toward its own emancipation. It marches toward a syndicalist regime in which everyone, including itself, will be worse off.

This analysis of today's situation is one that socialists, who want to be not fantastic doctrinaires but men aware of the existing situation, must keep in mind, in order to know what they must do in order to identify the points on which it is first appropriate to strike.

III. — THE MARXIST SOLUTION.

The solution which socialists traditionally offer to the ills of present society is the collectivization of all the material instruments of production, or at least, at first, of most of them.

Marxism intimates that it is not concerned with how the "*marmites de l'avenir*" [cooking-pots of the future] will be made, and its socialists followers obey this taboo. Effectively, this does not mean that they have retained a freedom of judgment and action with respect to the measures to be taken. It means that they have accepted with their eyes closed the solution whether it conformed or not to their goal of liberating the working classes. According to this ideal of collectivization they proceeded in Russia; according to this ideal the traditionalist socialists would proceed tomorrow, if they succeeded. And their main objection to any other solution is that it does not fully realize the abolition of capitalism: collectivism.

Whatever the reasons that led Marx to turn away from an examination of the adequacy of the collectivist solution, however, it is clear that *today* this attitude can no longer be retained. Today, after a quarter of a century of collectivism in Russia, and on the eve of situations decisive for the direction to be given to our civilization, it is necessary to know clearly whether or not this solution abolishes the evils indicated in the previous chapter. Here we do not care to examine whether or not there is some inescapable trend leading to the advent of this society.

Even assuming that it is so, what we are interested in now is whether such a trend solves those problems. If it were inevitable, and nevertheless proved deleterious to our ideals, collectivization could perhaps still be accepted with the humble resignation with which the good Christian accepts God's inscrutable designs. But it could not, by its inevitability, be said to be adequate to the ends at which it is aimed.

Collectivism is generally defined in two ways. For some it is to be realized in the form of workers' unionism, for others in the form of communism. The former argue that the means of production should be collectively owned by the groups of producers themselves, that is, by the workers of the individual categories, for the workers to provide for their management; the latter say that they should be given into the ownership of the state, which will administer them for the common good of all.

For the syndicalist solution (4) it will suffice to say that however income is redistributed within the unions, it only exacerbates all the sectional contrasts of today's society, which is already largely syndicalist. Syndicalism is a half-idea, which from the national point of view is worth less than nothing. It arises and meets with favor for two different reasons, both of which, however, indicate the mental sluggishness of those who propose it.

Syndicalists are first and foremost many, who see that the present society is already all bristling with syndicalist baronies, and they allow themselves to be carried along by the current, mystically hoping that, when it had reached the extremes, an idyllic situation would be arrived at. This syndicalism is put forth especially by those who seek to enhance the combativeness of forces already engaged in sectional struggles. The leaders who cultivate it do simple demagoguery. Syndicalism is not a solution, it is a process of social disintegration, tumbling along which eventually leads to the statization of all economic life.

⁴ For a detailed and rigorous examination of the logical absurdities of syndicalism see N. N., *Syndicalism = Chaos* [*Sindacalismo = caos*].

The equilibrium that is the harmonization among the various unions must eventually be imposed by the state, which dispositively takes over all management of the economy, leaving the union bodies with mere technical functions, or suppressing them without fail as superfluous. If the intervention of the state as autocratic order-maker takes place among the unions, (employers and workers) as they are today, consolidating the privileges that each had managed to grab and saving the wealthy classes, we have the type of totalitarian state. If the state puts order autocratically among the various workers' unions after they have arrived at the expropriation of the wealthy classes, you have the communist type of state. Syndicalist collectivization is but a mere bridge to totalitarian economics or communist collectivization.

But in more recent times other kinds of syndicalist solutions have appeared, dictated not by reasons of syndicalist demagogic. Many socialists and communists, frightened in the face of the developments in the Russian regime, have tried to devise compromise solutions, which maintain the principle of general collectivization but balance it with a decentralization in economic management, which should prevent bureaucratic despotism from the center. Their projects all lead back to syndicalist solutions, though these socialists try to disguise this because perhaps their bad conscience tells them that these are putrid solutions. But this manufactured syndicalism has the identical defects of the other, without even having the virtue of being something actually, though evilly, operating.

The general collectivization of the means of production, if it is to be carried out consistently, can only really be so in the form of a communist society: of a state that owns all the material means of production, and manages them according to its own plan (5).

But the general statization of the economy, when fully realized, does not lead to the marked purpose, but rather to the establishment of a regime in which the population is enslaved to the narrow class of bureaucratic managers of the economy. Under a communist regime,

⁵ For analysis of collectivist society see HAYEK, *Collectivist Economic Planning* [*Pianificazione economica collettivista*] and BRUTZKUS, *Economic Planning in Soviet Russia* [*La pianificazione economica nella Russia sovietica*].

that form of power and bullying which is based on wealth, and which mediates wealth grabs positions of privilege, may indeed be abolished. But it is an illusion to believe that wealth is the only way in which the inequalities, oppressions and exploitations that our conscience condemns can be crystallized. If a regime in which the power of wealth dominates is replaced by one in which in the hands of a few is placed practically the power to dispose of other individuals without limit, to use them as mere means to achieve their own ends — in that case we have not taken a step toward the realization of our ideal; we have taken one that decisively distances us from it.

Such is the communist regime. Simple reasoning, and the twenty-five-year experience of Russia, show that with the statization of the economy it is possible to create a greater equality of wealth, but an enormously greater inequality of power is created between the ruling class and the ruled class of workers. The latter becomes "*corvéable à merci*" [exploitable] by the rulers as no serf ever was. A very expensive and unprofitable apparatus for managing the economy is created, since in it that delicate indicator of the best mode of distribution of the instruments of production, which is constituted by the market price system, is lost, and no other can be substituted for it. The whole economic mechanism works only on the condition of standardizing products and needs to the extreme, depriving men of the opportunity to cultivate varied and complex inclinations and tastes; thus, that possibility of enhancing the human personality, which was intended to be extended to the working classes as one of the greatest merits of our civilization, is renounced. All citizens are turned into servants of the state, each one assigned, from above, the place he must occupy, and directed in what he must do and how he must do it: thus is destroyed that freedom of initiative and movement which is another of the virtues that should have been not abolished, but extended to those who enjoyed it only formally.

In order to keep such a gigantic and yet so imperfect mechanism in place, the utmost obedience must be demanded of all subjects. The different parts are so closely connected with each other, the whole is so lacking in elasticity, that any somewhat serious criticism threatens to blow everything up. It is therefore necessary to standardize all brains to the utmost with a regime of the strictest spiritual orthodoxy. European culture, which was

intended to be freed from the hedge that had kept it reserved for narrow aristocracies, and to which it was intended to give access to all those capable of further fertilizing it, is instead completely stifled.

Citizens, all of whom are dependent on state power that can starve them to death with a simple dismissal from their jobs, lack any serious opportunity to control the leaders, to make their needs heard, to replace them when they recognize their incapacity. The only political regime that can be reconciled with communist economics is bureaucratic despotism,

Is this what was needed? Evidently not. The principle of collectivization was but a hasty and erroneous deduction of the truly fundamental principle of socialism. Collectivization does not serve to harness and control economic forces for the benefit of all members of society; instead, it concentrates them into one immense force in the hands of a few men who can with it crush all others infinitely more severely than ever before.

Collectivism does not lead to the welfare of the working classes, although many workers are deluded by its myth. If we take into account that collectivism consists in the maximum enhancement of the strength of the state, we must say that the only thing it really serves is the preparation and conduct of total war. When a community must concentrate all efforts and all resources for war, when it must strictly discipline not only the fighting army but also the whole country behind it, collectivism is certainly the most consistent and radical form of such organization of social life. And in fact, all European countries have introduced it to a greater or lesser extent for this purpose. One of the forces that has most energetically pushed and pushes for it is the nightmare of total war.

Collectivism is the secret tendency of the modern sovereign state. The socialists who believed that they saw in it a means of liberating the working classes have actually succumbed to the influence coming from the idol of the imperialist state. And if the collectivist solution came out of the sphere of doctrinaire solutions and was put on the agenda, this happened when a total war had already imposed very strong collectivist

trappings. Socialists, fascinated by the gigantic machinery, deluded themselves into thinking they could use it for their own purposes. So thought Lenin during the other war; so think, for example, many laborists in England today, who say that their task will be to keep alive, by directing it to socialist purposes, the planned economy that the war is imposing on their country. But these are illusions. Communism, if it is well thought out, can only be communism of war; it is for winning a war, not for making men live civilly.

IV. — THE FEDERALIST SOLUTION.

This brief analysis of Marxism's solutions has brought us to a negative result. What then to do? Let us indicate in general outlines on what premises we believe a solution better responding to our ideal of civilization should be based.

We have already seen that the solution to the problem of misery, which is the specific task of socialism, has as its basic premise the elimination of the deleterious sectionalisms that impoverish and disorganize the whole of society. The most ruinous of these is that which derives from international political organization into sovereign states, and which manifests itself in imperialism. As long as there exists a state of affairs that breeds imperialism, any reform directed toward other goals is impossible and ends up becoming yet another tool of imperialist politics. We will not go on here to show the various aspects of this problem, the insufficiency of traditional solutions and how it should be addressed. This has been done in previous writings. We merely repeat that it is the absolutely preliminary condition. For this recognition of the preeminence of the problem of the formation of a federation of the present sovereign states — at least, at first, in Europe, where imperialism has reached its most terrible manifestations — the name by which the partisans of this solution can distinguish themselves from other currents is that of federalists.

Beyond geographical sectionalism, variously interwoven with it, feeding and nourishing it, is that of the large industrial and financial complexes, which have such strength in the modern world that they can make a policy of monopolistic exploitation, and succeed in exerting such great influence on political bodies as to bend them to develop legislation and policy in accordance with their particular interests. These complexes cannot be left in

private hands. They must be socialized. This is the correct sphere of application of the collectivist solution. It is the necessary means of eliminating all the very strong interests of monopoly capitalism.

Socialization in itself does not, however, undoubtedly mean the elevation of the working classes; it can be very extensive, and yet keep the latter in a state of subjection. To achieve this emancipation, the necessary measures are different. In the first place, it is necessary to take advantage of any critical situations in order to effect a redistribution of property that disregards the vested interests of the landlord classes, eliminates parasitic forms of ownership, and gives ownership of the means of production to workers capable of managing them, who are now practically excluded from it. Included in these measures are the transfer of land ownership to those who cultivate it and a broad transfer of title of the large industrial companies, concentrated in the hands of stockholders who contribute to production only by cutting coupons from their stock, to those of the workers who work in the companies themselves. These drastic measures would at once create a situation of much greater economic equality and would consequently make the free market a mechanism much better suited to the distribution of resources in relation to the varying urgency of consumers' needs than it is in present society.

By their extraordinary character, however, these measures, which are necessary to create the preconditions for a society based on equality, are not sufficient to maintain it. A whole series of institutions must be created to guarantee this outcome. Hence the need for a school system in which the education of the most capable young people and not the wealthiest is provided. as the present school system is; the need to use the immense resources that the technical capabilities of our society now make available to us to ensure that all citizens can satisfy the elementary needs of civilized life in whatever situation they find themselves, so that workers do not fall into such misery that they have to accept employment contracts on strangulating terms; the need for insurance measures which, without diminishing the spirit of initiative and sense of individual responsibility, relieve particular groups from the damage they are hit with as a result of technical progress and economic dynamics from which all of society benefits. This implies a number of measures which can only be taken

by force of law.

The widespread education of men endowed with great capacities for initiative and the ability to carry them out, of men who feel committed to building their own lives on their own account, and thus have independence from the ruling class and a highly developed sense of responsibility, this must be the end to be aimed at. The system of general collectivization is to be rejected, essentially because it leads to the opposite result: to the education of men who lack initiative and opportunities to enforce it, of servants who depend for every most minute aspect of their lives on the beneficence of the ruling class.

A ruling class oriented in the socialist sense described here, does not shy away from the building work necessary to channel individual energies toward the realization of the supreme values of our civilization, and to hold them firmly in the minds and habits of individual citizens and groups, who in themselves would easily lose sight of them. But he knows that even the best-intentioned political ruling class tends to turn into a closed group that manages power with sectional criteria, for its own exclusive benefit, if a resistance force capable of asserting itself against it is not developed in citizens. Therefore, its work is done in the sense of creating a society capable of producing better and better independent men, and therefore capable as much of controlling as of nurturing and renewing the ruling class itself.

These are, in broad outlines, the guidelines along which the federalists intend to work. There are certain basic premises — European federation, socialization of monopolies, redistribution of property — that can only be realized in revolutionary situations, during which all the conservative resistance that prevents their realization collapses. Subsequently, a period of transformation opens up, spanning an entire epoch.

Traditionalist socialists, persuaded that a definitive type of society can, indeed must, be created which no longer permits relapses into forms based on privilege, object that these transformations, radical though they may be, leave the view open to reactionary returns, to the reconstitution of the old capitalist society with its ills, inequalities, and contradictions.

They therefore say that such a revolution would not yet be the social revolution they hope for.

It must be acknowledged that this is true. This revolution opens the way for development in a progressive sense; it does not absolutely guarantee neither relapses nor arrests. It entrusts things to our children for them to carry them forward if they are willing and able. One cannot want to predetermine all the measures necessary for the total and irreversible realization of an end, which one cannot even determine in all its features, since one knows neither what obstacles will gradually arise, nor how the aspirations, tastes and desires of men will develop and change in the future.

Socialist society must not be conceived as the final conclusion of present history, as the attainment of an order without more dangers, without more pitfalls, in which all can rest as on a feather bed. Instead, it must be conceived as the beginning of an industriousness that can last and develop only as long as men retain a serious will to work in that direction. Situations of privilege will not reform; and if they do resurface, they will be eliminated if men in tomorrow's society are determined not to bring them back, and are, like us, anxious to develop more and more of this civilization of ours.

What matters above all, then, is not to create self-styled perfect institutions, but institutions in which men are formed who are eager and interested in developing them, as a guarantee of their freedom and as a means for their ascent to higher forms of individual and collective life. With such men, the dangers of tomorrow can be calmly faced with the confidence that they will be overcome. If, on the other hand, the prevailing human type were to be that of the obedient man-soldier, waiting for everything from above, it is clear that no social organization however perfectly conceived, could maintain a civilization of equality and freedom. A sharp division of mankind into a warrior or bureaucratic aristocracy, and into a mass of more or less diligent but abulic servants devoid of any sense of human dignity, would be inevitable.

The *ultimate* solution, hoped for by Marxists, would be precisely the creation of such a society in which men willing and able to live freely would disappear. It would totally eliminate, at first, the privileges of wealth, only by creating a privilege of state power so Leviathan, that nothing more could reasonably shake it off. And once the ruling class has such despotic power, wealth would return to it as a consequence.

The federalist solution, intelligent, and therefore not final, aims at raising men who can be confidently entrusted with the task of continuing the work begun. It would be time, it would be urgently time for the socialists to make up their minds to choose, even before the kind of institution to be created, the kind of men to be aimed at, and to whom the institutions of the new order should be entrusted.

V. — MARXIST POLITICS.

According to Marxism, the field in which the fate of society is ultimately decided is the field of class struggle. It is because there are such-and-such classes, so-and-so made, that such-and-such solutions impose themselves. It is useless to argue about solutions, because they are already determined in their general lines by the fact that the classes are what they are, and cannot be changed at will. The class struggle of the proletariat is the means to achieve socialism. But it is more than that: it is what determines what socialism is. This is nothing but the effect, the logical consequence of the proletariat's victory.

So says the Marxist myth, which has become so much of a prejudice that few dare, among socialist-oriented politicians, even question whether these statements are accurate. At most they allow themselves some minor variations.

There is, however, a veritable “nest of errors” in this approach. Let us try to identify them, in order to open a way towards a more exact understanding of the political instruments needed to achieve our ends.

First and foremost, the socialist orientation, being the purpose of extending the forms and fruits of our civilization to ever wider strata of society, could only arise among those who

had a vision of the overall interests of society and human civilization, that is, among those who had essentially political interests, and not among those who were mainly taken up with the particular problems of classes, categories, strata, etc. It is a historical fact that socialism was not at all conceived by proletarians, but by intellectuals and politicians who strove to win the masses to it. It is a process of generation exactly opposite to that described by Marxism. Like any other political tendency in the making, these intellectuals and politicians were led on the one hand to formulate with some precision the program according to which they proposed to realize their orientation, and on the other hand to try to identify and win over in society the forces on whose support they could rely.

The first work was accomplished in the first half of the last century essentially by the so-called utopians [utopian socialists], and concentrated on formulating the program of the abolition of private property and the establishment of communist society (6).

We have seen this to be a crude and inadequate formulation of the goal to be achieved. But this, if it matters for the future, has no significance retrospectively. Those who formulated it believed in its goodness. The collectivist program was widely accepted by socialists because of its apparent perspicuity and simplicity, and it formed the prop under which they sought to determine the social forces, on which socialists were to rest.

It is well known that the utopians sought them essentially by moralistic criteria. They expected men of good will, in love with that ideal, to set to work. These criteria were certainly too naïve. The right path in principle, after being set in motion in England and France, was finally pointed out by Marx, who for this reason became the predominant figure in the socialist movement.

Marx was a political realist; he did not create humanitarian fetishes oozing benevolence and impotence from every pore. He understood that a political current could assert itself

⁶ We cannot here, as it would take us too far, study the various elements that contributed to the formulation of this program. It would have to be studied the influence of the very ancient communist utopias of some Christian sects, of Enlightenment abstractionism, of humanitarian ideas, of mercantilist traditions, of the absolutist cult of the state, of that *avant lettre* technocracy which was Saint-Simonianism, etc., etc.

and triumph only if, and to the extent that, it found remarkable forces in society whose elemental aspirations could be captured within that scheme; forces likely to be convinced that they were interested in its realization.

Given the principle of collectivization as a criterion, it was to be expected that, with very rare exceptions, all those strata of the population who were owners or reasonably hoped to become owners would be opposed. Instead, a fertile field of penetration would be those who did not own means of production, could not reasonably hope to own them, and were victims — and therefore discontented — with the capitalist regime; that is, the proletariat.

Note that the indication was in principle correct, even if in reality the workers could not have gained any real benefit from collectivization, and even if of the whole possible field of conquest indicated by Marx only part of it could actually be conquered. In fact, the workers cannot be in a position to know the consequences implied in certain general principles, which make it possible to tell whether or not a certain social arrangement will be beneficial. Their action is moved by feelings and not by reasoning. But what mattered politically was that the resentments of the workers, that is, of the penniless class most easily organized and of greatest revolutionary value because of its centralization in the big cities, could easily be directed toward the goal of a general expropriation of the rich. And the probability that many workers would not become socialists did not matter excessively, for revolutionaries who did not set out to convince everyone but to frame sufficient forces to conduct their action.

The “proletariat” is not an entity existing independently of the political setting of the struggle for collectivism. Without this it is but an arbitrary statistical classification. It is an ideal term and becomes in part a reality, only when one presupposes modern society, a group of political men equipped with collectivist ideals, who determine the spheres of society to be conquered, to be given a unified political consciousness to guide them in the desired direction (7).

⁷ This applies to any other similar political entity. Italy in the Risorgimento was nothing more than the abstract field of action that Italic liberals wished to conquer and disestablish according to their ideals. An objective Italy was a mere geographical classification.

It is not the proletariat that has produced socialism, but socialism that has produced the proletariat.

Having identified the proletariat as the instrument for the realization of collectivism, Marx followed the path normally followed by all practical politicians who strive to win masses. They must exert by action and persuasion a whole work, by which the susceptibility of the masses to be led in a certain direction is changed into their actual and willing march in that direction. In order to achieve this, it is first necessary to exert a suggestion so as to persuade them that the end to be achieved is not imposed on them from without, but arises from their deeper needs. In this work of political orientation of the masses, a reversal of the actual relations is always accomplished.

This reversal is quite easily understood as an educational tool. In order to direct men, it is necessary to arouse in their minds a willingness to act in a certain way, and willingly one acts only insofar as one is convinced that one is acting in accordance with one's own requirements and not with imposed requirements. In reality, however, the leaders, insofar as they succeed, find in the men thus educated what they have put into them. This is the reason that prompted Marx to declare that socialism was a consequence of the existence of the proletariat, and that therefore one need not worry about what socialism looked like (8).

In fact, when determining the proletariat as the sphere of conquest, it had already been determined that it was the conquerable sphere to the idea of collectivism. It was therefore perfectly natural that this conquest would then arise as an emergence of the idea of socialism from the consciousness of the proletariat itself.

In order to succeed in actually directing the sphere thus determined, it is necessary to take as a starting point its actual spontaneous aspirations and struggles, and by means of the personal and organizational influence won in these struggles, to push it in the direction desired not by those spontaneous tendencies, but by the political movement that directs them.

⁸ Similarly in our days, Hitler put the taboo on the national-socialist program, forbidding members of his party to discuss it.

The proletariat, as an ideal entity that is the offspring of the idea of collectivism, is the complex of workers deprived of capital, practically in a condition where they cannot acquire it on their own account, and therefore victims of a capitalist order, and likely to join a struggle for the destruction of capitalism, in the hope of deriving benefit from that destruction. This abstract “proletariat” is embodied in the actual wage-workers in large industries, with their actual aspirations and actual methods of struggle.

Marx thought that the economic struggles of the workers (i.e., class struggles) were the lever or instrument by which the socialists could win over the workers that hold necessary to unify them into one proletariat and to give birth to collectivism.

What actually is this class struggle of the proletariat?

Leaving aside the definition of economic classes in general, for any kind of society, for it would serve us little purpose, let us turn our attention to the classes characteristic of capitalist society.

Every commodity divides society into two groups of individuals with conflicting interests about its price, the sellers and the buyers of that commodity. Next to them is the more or less extensive mass of those who are relatively indifferent, because they neither buy nor sell that commodity. If the use of the commodity spreads, it can be said that society tends to divide itself more and more into two opposing groups, with absorption and destruction of the outsider class. The sellers' group has, compared with the buyers' group, a common interest in selling the commodity at a high price, and an opposing common interest the latter have. But besides this antagonism between the two groups, there is another within each of them, for sellers and buyers are respectively in competition with other sellers and buyers of the same commodity; and this competition tends to bring about results contrary to those desired by each group.

Theoretically, there is a possibility for each group to abolish all or part of internal competition, to present itself as a monopolist or semi-monopolist group, to impose more

favorable terms of trade. Effectively, this possibility varies from group to group, and the fruits to be gained from it vary with each commodity. For some groups, practically syndicating is not possible and would bear little fruit, while others have convenience and succeed in varying degrees, arriving at a more or less extensive union discipline that mitigates and eliminates mutual competition within the group. Those groups that succeed, constitute the effective economic classes. Abstracting from the intervention of Marxist socialism, which uses various classes and infuses into them a political and perhaps even a mystical meaning, the terms class action, class consciousness, class struggles, etc., mean only that within the bosom of particular groups of individuals provided with homogeneous interests in the marketplace, there exist such conditions that facilitate the formation of trade unions and that these succeed in acting effectively for the purpose of gaining positions of privilege. Class struggle is essentially trade union struggle; it is nothing but the struggle for sectional interests (9).

Many are the classes that are provided with class consciousness, and that conduct a class struggle. Marx and his school turn their attentions only to the particular class struggles that take place within and around that sphere of society which they count on conquering, i.e. to the struggles of wage laborers against employers. But it is quite arbitrary to regard as a class, for example, metalworkers and not oil industrialists working to establish their own monopoly; neither do skilled workers have the same interests and solidarize with unskilled ones, nor do employers identify with capitalists, and even less with the bourgeoisie.

If we consider the tendency of the working classes to improve their living conditions, we see that the method of class struggle is not the only one by which they can achieve this goal. Indeed, for many strata, it is practically an unserviceable weapon. For example, for the peasants of southern Italy, the most important weapon for the past has been emigration. In many cases, the weapon is the law of the state that establishes a criterion for the distribution of a given good regardless of the ability to purchase it. Thus, for example, free elementary education.

⁹ In the Anglo-Saxon countries, where the penetration of Marxist socialism is minimal, the class struggle is presented in the pure state of union struggle of categories of workers more capable of organizing monopolistically. This is especially clear in the case of the United States.

However, among workers there are some groups capable of organizing in a classist sense. These are wholesale wage earners, and especially those in large industries, who coincide, to a large extent, with the sphere of the abstract proletariat of Marxism. And since the antagonistic group of employers also possesses considerable capacity to act as a class, the action of the workers could never end in the final imposition of a monopoly for the sale of their wares, as was often the case with other monopolies, but took the form of a persistent struggle between workers' unionism and employers' unionism, each striving to make its own monopoly efficient, and to break the opposing one by imposing its own conditions. Given the preeminent place occupied in modern life by industrial production, that struggle necessarily had to have very conspicuous aspects.

Marxist socialism relied on the progressive aspirations of the working masses to propagate socialist ideas, but it leveraged immediate interests, and therefore class struggle. This method, though in principle correct, presented dangers.

First, class struggles tended spontaneously not to lead to an organization of the whole proletariat for the purpose of establishing collectivism, as Marxists would have wished, but to class organizations. This is because there is no single undifferentiated commodity-labor, but there are multiple species of labor not easily interchangeable for the fulfillment of the same task, while a trade union can act effectively, as we have said, only if it embraces in its monopoly a fairly homogeneous commodity, that is, of which each part succeeds almost equally in satisfying the same needs. The class struggle, in reality, manifests itself even in the labor camp as a struggle of categories, which do not have coincidental interests; and each organization has by its nature a tendency to deal exclusively with its sectional interests. Class struggle is for socialists a valid tool, only to the extent that they succeed in holding the unions in check, not allowing them to go too far into category politics.

Second, the ultimate ideal that spontaneously develops from the class struggle is not socialism, but trade unionism. A workers' union tends as its ultimate goal to the establishment of a complete monopoly in its branch, breaking the employers' monopoly through the appropriation of capital. But unionism is, as we have seen, synonymous with

marasmus. Class struggle has, in its grandest developments, not constructive but destructive capacities. For this reason, too, socialists must have the consciousness and capacity to use the class struggle as an instrument, knowing that without their firm guidance it would fail the purpose. Finally, the class struggle, even if socialists succeed in imposing a certain unity on it, is, even in its grandeur, a struggle waged between two sections of society; large other sections remain alien to it, and within its framework many economic and non-economic problems of great social importance cannot fit.

Marx believed that this difficulty would vanish as a consequence of the supposed law of the concentration of capital and the proletarianization of the rest of society. Having found this assumption insubstantial, the mystical assertion of a special “historical mission” of the proletariat remained parochial. The actual resolution of the difficulty is achieved only by realizing that even a movement that thinks of a total rearrangement in the socialist sense fails to appeal to men in general, but only to the strata that suffer most from the existing order and are simultaneously most combative. The movement will win not when it has conquered the majority of spirits, but when it has won among the malcontents sufficient forces to wrest victory. Concentrating one’s forces to conquer essentially only a part of society is not in itself a mistake. But it is not so only provided one realizes that the solution will be achieved if the leaders remain masters of the movement, and will fail if they become mere executors, or mere vanguards of its one-sided aspirations.

Now from Marx came, directly or indirectly, two currents that responded differently to these problems arising from the proletariat’s use of class struggle against the capitalists as a political tool.

The social democrats (or socialists in the strict sense of the word) naïvely took as their directive for action what was only the romantic and propagandistic veneer of Marxism, that is, the idea that the proletariat was the bearer, albeit unwittingly, of the new civilization and that it was up to them to do maieutic work, helping it to bring to light what it already had in its bosom. Revolutionary shocks to break down some resistance were not ruled out, but they were regarded as brief jolts that would serve to better ripen in the proletariat an

awareness of the profound coincidence between its own and the general interests. Therefore, the social democrats were to be in essence the executors of the will of the sovereign proletariat, or, at most, its advisers.

In their crass ignorance of the formative function of political leadership, the social democrats became prisoners of the instrument they were supposed to use. Under socialist formulations, deep proletarian sectionalism was reformed and consolidated, and the social democrats, relying on its spontaneous aspirations, abandoned the original claim of socialism to remedy the general ills of today's society, dealing more and more with those of particular sections of the working classes. The policy known by the name of reformism was the policy aimed at obtaining this or that privilege for this or that category, which most energetically conducted its sectional politics. The social democrats continued and continue to speak of socialism as their end, but in practice they never thought or did anything but syndicalism. In fact, they have largely contributed to the luxuriance of today's syndicalist chaos.

But there is also a second current. Marx had developed a romantic-democratic theory on the "spirit of the proletariat," which is as valid as the other romantic theories on the spirit of the peoples, popular sovereignty, race, etc. But as a politician, he knew that the working class was not the spontaneous creator but had to be the instrument of the socialist movement. His theory prevented him from being fully aware of this, but there is no political act of his that does not reveal this deep persuasion. The Marxists and the "*patiti*" [fanatics] of Marxism, who play the scandalized today in hearing this recalled, are requested to take cognizance, for they show that they have so little of it, of what was the policy of Marx who was called — rightly — a Blanquist[†] and Jacobin, who always advocated the necessity for socialists to make a general democratic policy, and not a class policy, and frowned upon the formation of a workers' movement concerned above all with its class interests (**10**).

[†] Referring to the ideas of French socialist Louis Auguste Blanqui

¹⁰ We cannot dwell on this point, which has a simple retrospective interest, See Ch. I of ROSENBERG, *History of Bolshevism [Storia del bolscevismo]*.

The second Marxist political directive, which was fully developed by the Bolsheviks, and which is known by the name of communism, consists in this: It accepts as propaganda material all the mythology about the historical mission of the proletariat, but is careful not to take it seriously, not to “let itself be convinced by its own syllogisms,” as is the case with the social democrats. Communists do not intend to be — even if they say so — the vanguard of the proletariat; they want to be its leaders; they want to organize its forces and exploit them to achieve their goal. They know that alongside the proletariat there are other classes, and everywhere they seek to penetrate, influence, direct, utilize. But these other supports are subsidiary. Since their plan is that of general collectivization, they know that the only force on whose resentments they can confidently rely on to achieve this end is the working class. They take advantage of every opportunity to push the class struggle of the workers to the maximum. They know that this maximum is the syndicalist-type expropriation of industry, and they therefore favor all elements of extreme workers’ syndicalism (factory councils, soviets, dictatorship of the proletariat). But they also know that the resulting regime is not viable: it can only serve to sweep away private property, not to establish a new type of economic organization. They are therefore consistently preparing to replace the anarchic and insubstantial regime of syndicalist collectivism with that of state collectivism through a dictatorship of their party. Having achieved this, they would have at their disposal political and economic equipment that would enable them to move to an ever more complete collectivization, even in those sectors that they had at first been unable to statize.

It must be recognized that, if one believes that egalitarian state collectivism is an end to be achieved, this is an appropriate policy. The proletariat is precisely the necessary instrument of it, not because the workers would derive benefits from such a solution — they would ultimately derive subjugation and damage from it — but because they are the part of the population on which that deceptive solution can most easily appeal. One uses its destructive force, while knowing that it has no reconstructive capacity (as no other economic class does). And at the same time, one organizes the movement with strict discipline, for the time when the reconstructive dictatorship of the Communist Party will become possible and necessary.

Belief in the spontaneously creative force of the class struggle of the proletariat might have been there when that struggle was in its infancy, and the fatal dead ends to which it led were not known. Now that all classically set political movements are known and have been found to have failed, the most important current of Marxist socialism has in fact disengaged itself from them; in the class movements of the proletariat it sees only necessary instruments. The last disconsolate vestals of the faith in the spontaneous creative force of the proletariat are the surviving social democrats, syndicalists, revolutionary socialists, communist opponents, anarchists, etc. laggards who are not worth worrying too much about.

The result of our examination of Marxist politics, therefore, is as follows. It is false that there exists an inescapable social force — the proletariat — which begets a socialist party, whose task should be limited to giving conscious form to the tendency immanent in that class toward communism. On the contrary, the communist political party tends to consolidate into a single force the various forces likely to be conquered by Marxist mythology in order to create the political force “proletariat” — a mass instrument that should be apt to achieve the goal of collectivism.

The communist political tendency, sketched out by Marx, had then vanished from the European political scene, preserving itself only in Russia where it succeeded in coming to power. After World War I, however, it reappeared, presenting itself as the fiercest and most determined wing of the progressive European currents. Let us examine in some detail why it occupies this position today. This will help us better clarify what constitutes the crux of European political life in our time.

In the revolutionary situations of our epoch there has always been a liquefaction of the influence of traditional democratic parties, and a polarization of the masses toward communist tendencies on the one hand, and totalitarian tendencies on the other. Except for the case of the Russian Revolution, everywhere else it turned out that the communist hold on the masses succeeded in mobilizing a fighting force inferior to that of the totalitarian tendencies, which focused on national, religious, and racial interests and traditions, on the

supporters of vested rights, on the grievances of the impoverished middle classes, etc., and used these forces to consolidate the power of the privileged classes or to regain it if they had been thrown off, The disadvantage of the communists with respect to totalitarian politics is very serious. However much they maneuver to broaden their base, they are so tied to their collectivization program that they are unable to gain sufficient strength for their ambitious plans.

However one presumes to assess the probability of victory of the communists and reactionaries, it is certain, however, that there seems to be some deep tendency leading to this polarization, a kind of line of least resistance, whereby all other alternatives seem to pale and make themselves more difficult to achieve in any situation of revolutionary crisis. So we have to ask ourselves what is the reason why we have seen them in the past, and come back to see them today as fascinated by the communists and driven to silence all objections, all criticism in order to put themselves in their wake and let themselves be used by them (I say used, because the communists are too aware of their function to treat them otherwise).

If you ask why, you will hear the answer — in democratic style — that the masses now want a socialist revolution, that the workers are no longer willing to subject themselves to master capital, that the proletariat has now been educated for almost a century by the Marxists, that the people will demand at the moment of the revolutionary crisis the abolition of private property, and that therefore it is necessary to orient oneself toward the party that sets itself this goal, seeking, at most, to give it good advice, so that it does not make too many disasters.

The thing expressed in these terms is inaccurate. What is true is only that in the coming revolutionary crisis there will be, as always in such crises, a strong explosion of class struggles, which, as we have seen, do not in themselves indicate an inclination toward communism. As to this inclination, that is, as to the influence of Marxist parties, it should be noted that there are worker strata, which in some countries are the majority of workers, not at all socialist though avid fighters of class struggles — such as those in America and

England. In continental European countries, until yesterday, the proletariat was, yes, much more imbued with the ideas of Marxist socialism, but this constituted more of a varnish than a substance. In fact, in its majority, it followed the social democratic parties, that is, the parties of syndicalist reformism and not the communist ones. Furthermore, when one considers the prospects with respect to the future, one must take into account that the Marxist tradition is now accompanied by a depressing dead weight of failures and disappointments: and in several countries the long totalitarian reaction has broken the previous link between Marxists and workers, and the younger generations ignore Marxist socialism.

That the predominant sentiments determining the conduct of workers in the coming tomorrow should be those of collectivism, is therefore a gratuitous statement, not at all self-evident. The field is much clearer than some would have us believe.

But even assuming that this crude popular sentiment was what it is said to be, this does not explain the tendency of today's revolutionary crises to slide toward that solution. Popular sentiments are simply facts that parties use, and therefore not they, but the orientations of the parties that direct them and the way those parties maneuver those sentiments, give the key to explaining the course of political events. If the most pugnacious and capable progressive political leaders were to change their traditional orientations, this might produce transitory crises of confidence in the masses, but if they were well decided in their views, if they knew with certainty what needs to be done and how to do it at critical moments, they would succeed in being followed.

Therefore, in order to answer our question, we must not defer to the feelings of the masses, but ask: what is the reason why the orientation of progressive political leaders so stubbornly sticks to the solution of the statization of the economy? If we discover this reason, we will certainly understand the reason for the fascination of the communists. For these are the party which has posed in the most consistent terms the political problem of collectivism, and which is most capable of solving it in our time. The other progressive forces convinced at heart that toward that goal we must march, even if reluctant, cannot help but feel a kind

of inferiority complex toward the communists, a certain disposition to abdicate at decisive moments in their favor, since they do not know how to rise to the gold resolve.

Socialism always implies, however one formulates it, the assignment of important new functions to the state, for the control of economic forces means in essence the creation of public institutions and laws of various kinds. The state is the political instrument by which socialist control is exercised. But Marxist socialism, with the statization of all economic life, assigns absolute, total importance to the state. One cannot collectivize all the instruments of production and plan all economic activity accordingly without having a very strong state apparatus. The arm of the state must be so developed that it embraces the entire life of the country. Now, if it were only their doctrinairism that pushed the socialists toward the solution of statization, it would not be excessively serious. Since experience has shown that it is an inadequate solution for achieving its ends, the idea of communism should gradually fade away.

Effectively there is, however, in the present situation of modern civilization, something that urges an increasing intervention of the state, tending to make it take over all the economic life of the country. Marxists have not pinpointed precisely the reasons for this tendency, but they undergo it, striving only to direct it in the way they consider advantageous for the working classes. In spite of their claims, collectivization is not a technical necessity of production, which, on the contrary, would be damaged by it, nor is it in the interest of the working classes, which would be satisfied by certain interventions and certain collectivizations, but not at all by total intervention that would substitute bureaucratic masters for capitalist masters.

One force driving growing collectivism is the need to put authoritarian order to growing economic sectionalism. But superimposed on this and allied to it in various ways, what drives it with the greatest energy is the need of the state to prepare for war. As long as this is the predominant need, there will be in the ruling classes a constant tendency to exploit all opportunities, all sentiments, all interests to make the state's hold on the lives of the citizens greater, to take a further step towards the barracks-society.

Socialists are neither militarists nor nationalists. They envision a society in which there will be no more wars, an international socialist society. However, they accept the nation-state as the supreme force of economic and political organization of which they can practically make use of today to achieve their end. To accept this idol determines them, on the one hand, in all European politics, which has so far failed to create anything superior to sovereign states, and on the other hand, in their collectivist ideology, which is not realizable without the presupposition of a country already strongly adept at obedience to a higher authority. Theoretically an international communism can be conceived. Practically it is only possible to build national communisms, since an international state is lacking; nor can one be constituted at once, provided with the strength and authority, to acquire which it has taken nation states centuries to acquire.

The path of least resistance that presents itself to socialists for the realization of collectivism is that of collectivism on a national basis; that is, to accept the natural tendency of the state toward the statization of the economy, and to seize the direction of its mechanism, in order to use it for its own purposes. But national communism would not eliminate the contrasts of geographic sectionalism; on the contrary, it would exacerbate them, since it would make every country-to-country exchange relationship the subject of diplomatic negotiations between the various states, and thus would be the cause of greater friction and stronger imperialist tendencies since it would pit, as unitary blocs, the richest countries — for greater endowments of natural resources and technical equipment, and for greater population capacities — against the poorest countries. Imprisoned, as they are, by the idea of national communism, and semi-conscious of the impossibility of peacefully reconciling the conflicting demands of the eventual collectivist states, the communists take refuge either in the dream of the universal mutual benevolence that will reign among those states when capitalism is no more, or in the dream of a Russian imperialism that would impose an international communist unity by force of the army.

Having accepted as an immutable given for our epoch the current sovereign state with its strong militarist demands, the line of least resistance for political movements is that of the struggle about various types of collectivism. For the latter is implicit in the militarist

demand. That is why the alternatives tend to polarize toward either communist collectivism, eliminator of the privileges of wealth, or totalitarian collectivism, conservative of the situation of the privileged classes. Although antithetical, the two movements are on the same plane, both accepting the trend toward the barracks society.

The stubbornness with which socialists hold to the collectivist ideal is an expression of the unconscious dependence of progressive forces on the national and militarist idol. Even the forces that believe they are fighting it are actually working for it (11).

The conclusion we come to, therefore, is that the most consistent method by which existing social forces can be employed for the realization of egalitarian collectivism is the communist method; and that the general condition that favors the polarization of progressive forces toward communism, that is, toward egalitarian collectivism, and reactionary forces toward totalitarianism, that is, toward pro-privileged collectivism, is the struggle on a national scale.

VI. — FEDERALIST POLITICS.

Wanting to specify what the realistic and unprejudiced politics of the federalists should be, we must examine: 1) What concrete possibilities there are today for a federalist ruling class to be formed and put to work; 2) How the sphere of conquerable social forces on which to rest in order to achieve victory is to be determined in accordance with the federalist program; 3) What should be the method, by which these forces are to be conquered and guided.

¹¹ The example of English socialism is characteristic. England, an unmilitaristic country, has always been an unfruitful field for Marxist ideas, although it has performed many single collectivizations. But the ideal of statization has taken hold there in parallel with the growth of militarist demands. Today, when the conflict imposes on it a collectivism of war, labour, while invoking for the morrow a federation of peoples, declares that it intends to maintain and develop the planned economy. If they do this, they will undoubtedly make the federation fail, for their planned economy can only be English, autarkic, sectional, nationalist. It will be possible to make England join the federation while nationalizing many of its enterprises. There is no insuperable contradiction. But it will not be possible to make a viable federation and a planned national economy.

1) Any program of social political renewal is initially worked out by thinkers who, having especially at heart political problems, indicate certain possible directives, in accordance with certain civilizational values. Such thinkers are never numerous, nor do they generally directly influence political action. They may be called, rather than political leaders, political advisers. Advisers in an ideal sense, since the advice may perhaps be heard by successive generations, or by men other than those to whom it was addressed. For their indications, their legislation of the future, to become a real directive for action, there must be formed groups of political men of action for whom those indications are a fact of their spiritual formation, and whose main interest and passion consists in the work of organizing and commanding men: not in working out programs, but in devoting their energies to carrying them out.

No program moves from the realm of ideal values into the realm of concrete action unless it is embraced by an effective ruling political class, by active and organized minorities who seriously set out to carry it out. On the other hand, these groups of men of action do not form, if there are not in the society and epoch in question certain general conditions, which make the realization of the program think practically possible. The active interest of men of action goes to the things that practically can be done, and not to the things that are good, but impossible.

A federalist solution has been thought of by several people, for quite some time and in several countries, as a rational solution to the difficulties of European civilization (12). But the counsels did not find men of action willing to listen to them, for the difficulties for realization presented themselves so gigantic, that even the best-intentioned could do nothing but wish for more favorable conditions for the future. How to come to grips with those giants endowed with such potent vitality, which are the nation-states? How to disengage social forces from their traditional political orientation directed toward obtaining the satisfaction of their aspirations within the national sphere? How to overcome the obstacle of the centuries-old monarchies, the interests represented by the generals, the

¹² The spiritual fathers of this idea in Italy were two original and powerful political thinkers of our Risorgimento: [Carlo] Cattaneo and [Giuseppe] Mazzini.

industrialists protected with customs duties, and all the other groups that had encrusted themselves around the nation-state? The thing tasted like utopia; and utopias exert a certain attraction on the spirits of advisors, not on those of men of action.

And if so much resistance is still encountered by the federalist program among the old wound-covered politicians of the old national-duty parties, it is essentially because they cannot see what effective political action would be possible to realize it.

Yet we are convinced that if the central problem for European politicians continued to present itself as the central problem of the conquest of power in the increasingly collectivist sovereign nation-state, if passions and interests constituted around these states continued to be so imposing and solid as to discourage any willingness to attack them, the whole federalist approach would remain as if it were camp in the air, because it would be too arduous to reassemble the current leading to the alternative of communism or totalitarianism, and which feeds and strengthens the number of men of action who become communists or totalitarians.

But precisely this basic premise, precisely the acceptance of the existence of sovereign states as an indisputable fact, precisely the fascination with them, is what is rapidly fading away. In the next five years, the question first for Europeans will be not how to organize their respective countries, but how to *organize peaceful and civilized coexistence on their continent*, once the attempted imperial solution has been frustrated. This problem will be solvable only with the realization of the political, judicial, financial, and military institutions of the new federal state. And such a result cannot be achieved except by directing all the political forces at their disposal toward concerted international action.

The urgency of the question, the possibility at hand of its solution, the fruitfulness of the beneficial results that would result from it, cannot fail to exert an increasingly powerful attraction on politicians, inducing them to connect with this the various other political problems of the revolutionary epoch. But to set the problem coherently leads to the dissolution of those complexes of sentiments, of purposes, of actions, which crystallized

around the sovereign nation-state as the supreme currently possible form of organization of the European peoples. The march toward collectivism is, on a national scale, a line of least resistance, and politicians will be inclined to slip or stick to it with immense ease. On an international scale, it becomes a line of maximum resistance fraught with immense obstacles, for it lacks both the mighty administrative tools needed and the deep traditional discipline that only sovereign states with their militarist past possess.

In a national policy framework, any necessary socializations of the revolutionary era would inevitably take further steps toward a national programmed economy.

Within the framework of federalist policy, they would be measures aimed at the elimination of monopolistic privileges, which would be part of the work of destroying the more or less autarkic programmed economies, and would be part of the work of creating a free European market on which alone can be relied upon for the fusion of the ailing national economies into a single, healthy European economy.

On the national level, persistent military needs would prevent effective measures for the elimination of misery by channeling the maximum available material resources and human energies toward war aims. At the international level, it is possible to address and resolve the problem of European militarism totally and definitively, and to free enormous resources from this unproductive employment, thus effectively paving the way for the possibility of the various expenditures necessary to create a much greater equality of opportunity for all.

While, therefore, in a nationally motivated progressive politics things are now at a point where the Communists represent, by the decisiveness and precision of their plans, the center of attraction of the active minorities, on an international scale the Communist idea would lose all force of attraction; indeed, the most intelligent among the Communists themselves would end up being attracted toward federalist politics.

Not abstract reasoning, but federalist action itself will make disappear from the minds of politicians what has hitherto been the obsessive belief in an inexorable march of mankind

toward collectivism, a belief due only to the absurd acceptance of the taboo of the sovereign nation-state. It is federalist action itself that will facilitate the exact understanding of the concrete problems of socialism. No doubt the old numb politicians continue their way. Devoid of imagination, devoid of initiative, they are dead men burying their dead. But the federalist program, capable of transmuting itself into reality in our own epoch, in our own years, cannot fail to exert a powerful attraction on fresh minds, eager for fruitful action, not yet engaged in the old careers, or capable of feeling their hollowness and abandoning them.

On the level of purely national problems, the federalists would find themselves as out of phase, and would end up fruitlessly mournful, On the level of European problems, because of the clarity of their views they would quickly make all progressive tendencies that did not move in their own direction become out of phase and uncertain.

2) As we have seen happen with Marxism, and as happens with any political directive, federalism must also determine the sphere of conquerable social forces. We will not repeat here the description of it that was made in the previous section. The dividing line that federalism tends to provoke does not coincide with that of the traditional parties, and affects the national, class forces in its own peculiar way. This fills the followers of the old tendencies with scandal. Marxist parties accuse the federalists of reactionary tendencies because they see, for example, that the “bourgeoisie” is no longer regarded in bloc as the enemy, that a distinction is made between the monopolist and protectionist bourgeoisie, and the free-trade bourgeoisie which is regarded as a favorable element. Or they cry betrayal because they see that the “proletariat” is no longer considered in bloc as allies, but is distinguished between workers fighting for common emancipation, and workers from the selfish category and class politics. And from a different point of view, national parties raise similar accusations. But since the task of federalism is different from that of communism and nationalism, it is not really understood why the criteria for division should be the same. We have seen that divisions into classes or nations are not absolute and irremovable facts, but have meaning and value only as a function of political directives and programs.

If we review the forces likely to be interested in a federalist solution and to remain loyal to it afterwards, we see that they include the enormous majority of the populations of European countries. However, one should not indulge in illusory calculations for this reason. Any radical modification of the existing order of things meets with fierce resistance from those who would be harmed by it and who know well what their losses would be; while it hardly succeeds in gaining the active support of those who would be advantaged, who misrepresent the eventual benefits they would derive from it. The Italian liberals of the Risorgimento, for example, could count in the abstract on the enormous majority of Italians, but in reality only on those willing to fight.

The same applies to the federalists. They cannot and must not calculate on the undifferentiated help of the masses, but only on those which can most easily be brought to the terrain of struggle in an organized way and whose weight is decisive; for they propose to have forces capable of action, not masses capable of making impotent demonstrations of sentiment.

When, for example, they say that, given the importance of the politics of the workers of the big cities in revolutionary situations, it is essential to win an organized influence over the workers, since their intervention will be decisive for a federative socialist solution, they mean precisely to point to one of these masses which, though not exclusive, has the greatest importance in bringing a struggle to a successful conclusion. Similarly, not all countries will contribute with equal weight to the solution, and it is therefore necessary to focus above all on the victors of tomorrow.

In short, in tomorrow's revolutionary situation, one must rely on certain more combative and more influential forces to carry the rest. It does not matter whether they are majorities or minorities. What matters is that they are sufficiently strong. But, comes the objection from traditionalist politicians of different shades, these forces are already committed under Marxist, national, etc. political leadership. How do you plan to overcome this obstacle? It seems that federalism has no other reserves to draw on; that the existing forces are now the exclusivity of other political movements.

One should not be frightened by these claims; they are actually without any foundation. The masses currently influenced by traditional ideologies are a small part of those that the revolutionary crisis will suddenly drag into the political arena. Although, at first, the old trends will appear very inflated, their connection with the masses will be weak and easily changed. In every revolutionary crisis, at first the masses flock, it is true, under old banners, and the real revolutionaries are infamous minorities; but relations will change rapidly, when the old tendencies remain embarrassed and powerless in the face of what are in fact the most urgent problems of the moment. Moreover, the old national, classist, etc. tendencies now all present themselves not laden with prestige and hope, but with painful and humiliating memories. As we have already said, the field presents itself much clearer than their self-styled exclusive occupants claim. By working seriously and realistically, the federalists can mobilize the forces needed to win.

3) In what way to work?

If we take a closer look at the forces and tendencies that can be brought to the terrain of struggle, we find that alongside elements that are favorable and useful for the goal to be achieved, there are others that work in the opposite direction. Let us take a few examples.

City workers, as a more combative class, more easily organized, more imbued with progressive ideas than other strata of workers, are one of the most important favorable forces. However, they also tend, in their economic struggles, to restrict their actions to the simple selfish category horizon, with the deleterious syndicalist consequences already repeatedly mentioned.

The peasants, with their aspiration for land ownership, are also a mobilizable force, especially in countries where the agrarian question is most burning; but they ignore and want to ignore every other more complex problem that surpasses that of their land.

Free-trade entrepreneurs are an operable force in federalist action; but, if prospects are opened up for special favors to their industries, or if they hope to impose lower wages on

workers, they easily link up with reactionary political forces.

Turning from the field of economic interests to that of political tendencies, we see that democratic socialist tendencies are very sensitive to anti-militarist, internationalist and popular approaches, and will thus be able to supply many forces to the federalist work. But they also tend to deviate from this directive if they are presented with the perhaps illusory possibility of more immediate socialist or democratic achievements on a reduced (and poisoned) national scale (**13**).

Finally, in the national camp, forces animated by feelings of patriotism — today one of the strongest sentiments in the common man — cannot fail to see that only within a federalist framework would they guarantee a peaceful and secure development for their country. But they easily close themselves off in a national “sacred selfishness,” thinking only of guaranteeing the greatest possible security for their country with the strengthening of its military power. In short, all forces in favor of federation are such, insofar as they are controlled by a ruling class that compels them to act within a general political directive; but they tend in themselves to break this framework, letting themselves go along this or that sectional policy, if the ruling class gets carried away and follows — in obedience to this or that myth of “popular sovereignty,” “class mission,” “race,” etc., etc. — the immediate and spontaneous impulses of the masses.

The task of consciously coordinating, utilizing and refining particular forces is the specific function of any governing or would-be governing class worthy of the name — in tranquil and in agitated epochs.

In peaceful epochs, where the general directive is now established in popular habits, and where therefore there is considerable mutual understanding between rulers and ruled, this guidance is easy, and the appearance arises that those simply execute the will of the ruled, rather than rule and guide it. But, if properly observed, one recognizes that this is an

¹³ It has already been noted for the case of the English labor movement this contradiction between the two aspirations.

illusion. When it really happens that way, the result is not coordinated action, but the gradual dissolution of state authority by the action of centrifugal particular forces, the dislocation of society into groups in increasingly fierce brawls for the achievement of their particular interests. However great, ancient and steadfast the general rules of any social coexistence may be, they blow to pieces if the ruling class fails in its work of direction, failing to contain the particularistic and centrifugal impulses immediately springing from below.

This appears in all its fullness, in revolutionary epochs, when the old habits, laws, institutions, apparatuses of force, which maintained the old general directive of civilization, collapse. The old ruling class has fallen, and there is no new one yet. There is only a struggle among the various political movements, each of which tends to gain power. There is then a rift between the leaders and the masses. On the one hand, there are political movements, composed of men of action who, animated by the same ideal of civilization, formulate a feasible program in circumstances deemed imminent or present, and work coordinately under a common direction to carry it out, that is, to draw behind themselves sufficient forces to impose new laws institutions, customs. On the other hand, there are the floating masses, capable of being framed, educated and accustomed to this or that general political framework, but for the meantime still lacking such framing, or understanding only their immediate particular interests.

In these situations, individuals and parties that rely on the spontaneous aspirations of the masses may even at first and transiently enjoy great popularity, but they cannot constitute true leadership. They are corks floating on the waves, tossed here and there; they are elements that contribute to the continuation of chaos. Those who are aware of the true meaning of political direction seek instead to take command of the forces unleashed by the revolution, indulging them in their aspirations to the extent necessary to channel them toward their intended goal,

But this they can achieve only on the condition that they feel first and foremost that they are held to a discipline toward their political movement. They therefore use the influence

they manage to win over the masses and their organizations to use them for the benefit of their movement, and not vice versa. This does not mean that they go against the will of the masses — for this will does not in fact exist. On the contrary, it means that they work to form such a will of the masses, framing them in organizations capable of using all favorable pushes from below and neutralizing all harmful ones, in order to impose by persuasion and force “standing on the lion and on the fox” a new complex of customs, laws, and institutions. This ability of the masses to follow, this inability of the masses to point out and propose on their behalf the reconstructive tasks, this need for strong leadership of the ruling class, are the conditions of the so-called revolutionary dictatorship.

Any epoch of upheaval ends, after a chaotic period, in an organization of forces behind this or that political movement endowed with such qualities, and in a final struggle among them to decide the basis on which to rebuild the new order.

Federalists intend to be not inebriated corkers of the moment of collapse, but sober actors of the period of building the new order. In the foreseeable crises of tomorrow, popular forces will tend to cluster around this or that movement capable of guiding them through the storm. In the camp of reactionary forces, eager to preserve or restore threatened or lost privileges, these movements will, by their very nature, however they disguise themselves, have totalitarian tendencies. In the field of progressive forces, in a whole range of countries, the movement best prepared for such action so far is the communist movement. All our examination, however, has led us to the conclusion that while it is technically well equipped, it is nevertheless incapable of realizing the true demands of the progressive civilizational direction.

The federalists intend to form the nucleus of a progressive ruling class, which has the revolutionary capabilities of the Communists, without having its tares (14). Its enemies are

¹⁴ Some “*patiti*” [fanatics] of Marxism reproach the Federalists for wanting to use the workers, deceiving them, and then throwing them apart like lemons squeezed out of service rendered.

After all that has been said, let us not dwell on this silly accusation.

The Federalists intend, no doubt, to use the workers' forces (as well as other spontaneous popular forces) as an instrument in the political struggle. But this is not their particular perversity; it is what all serious political movements that want to implement a program do and must do.

the reactionary forces that intend to preserve the privileges of sovereign states, sectional selfishness, parasitic wealth — that is, imperialist militarism, economic disorder and exploitation of the weak.

The accusation of deceivers is totally ridiculous. The workers are supposed to have in their bodies, by virtue of the holy spirit, even if they do not know it, the solution of total collectivization; and if anyone wants to lead them on a different path, he is said to be deceiving them. Regardless of this demagogic approach, the fact stands that the goal to be achieved is known and clear to the political leaders, not to the masses. But if this means to deceive, it must be said that the Federalists deceive no more than the Marxists or any other political movement.

As for the purpose of getting rid of the workers at the end of the party, not only is this a slander, but it is precisely what the collectivists to the bitter end would do. It is they who, when they succeed in establishing collectivism, must get rid of the workers as a political force, turning them into mere parts of a gigantic machine. Only under such conditions does the collectivist economic machine work. If the federalists want an economic transformation other than collectivist, it is precisely because they do not want the workers to be cast aside as citizens and reduced to the honorific function of state servants.