

Bordiga and the Fate of the Species

Jacques Camatte, November 2020

Preface to the 2021 English edition of "The Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today" by Amadeo Bordiga

Translated and Edited by Radical Reprints

In my 1974 preface to "The Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today" by Amadeo Bordiga, I pointed out the importance of this study in itself and in relation to Marxism, as well as the theory of the proletariat. The merit of the latter was "to be able to maintain the pole of the future, communism, even if, at the present time, we conceive it differently". Since then came the fall of the Berlin Wall, ending Soviet domination over the countries of Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, without proletarian intervention on a class basis. Moreover, Bordiga's long-awaited admission (of the capitalist nature of the USSR) did not really happen. The only thing that was in agreement with the Bordigist perspective was that these events were ultimately related to the future of the world market. I will quote in particular a fact that was not noticed at the time, being the intervention of Asian countries like Singapore and Hong Kong that completely undermined the industrial exports of East Germany and Czechoslovakia that exported various products, such as cameras and other early consumer electronics, at low prices. The Soviet Union had no economic solution to such a disaster, which led to the break-up of the Eastern bloc.

More importantly, it was in the 1970s that the end of the revolutionary process was imposed. In the 1980s the proletariat as a class was dissolved, and today, capital as such is disappearing. It is being replaced by the autonomization of its form, which corresponds to the establishment of virtuality.

Thus, A. Bordiga's work would no longer have any importance for our future. However, if we approach the study of the Russian question not only in itself but also in relation to the development of capital in the West, things look different. At the beginning of the 1950s there was an international debate on whether the USSR was socialist. Some theorists argued that it was not, but that it was building socialism. A. Bordiga agreed with this diagnosis, but added: it means that it is developing capitalism, the basis on which socialism

can develop. Generalizing with regard to the West, he said: here too much has been built, it must be destroyed. This was totally consistent with his statement about the possibility of socialism from 1948. This led him to set out a plan of measures to be taken immediately after taking power (party meeting at Forli in 1952), where it was stipulated, among other things:

"1. Divestment of capital, i.e., the use of a smaller part of the product for instrumental goods.

2. Raising production costs so as to be able to give, until the disappearance of wage-labour, the market and money, higher wages for less working time.

3. Rigorous reduction of the working day, at least to half of the current hours, absorbing unemployment and anti-social activities.

4. Reduction of the volume of production by means of a plan of underproduction that concentrates it in the most necessary areas; authoritarian control of consumption, fighting against advertising fads for those that are useless and harmful; abolition of activities that propagate reactionary psychology.

5. Stopping the construction of houses and workplaces around big cities and even around small towns, as a starting point towards the uniform distribution of the population in the countryside. Reducing the speed and volume of traffic, prohibiting unnecessary traffic".

It can be said that by advocating these measures Bordiga initiated a dynamic that I have called inversion, that is to say, "the establishment of a future contrary to the one carried out until today". This assertion is all the more justified because at the same time (early 1950s) he confronted, with great magnitude, the question of the relationship of the species to nature. For example: *The Human Species and the Earth's Crust* (1952), where the question of overpopulation is addressed, and *Space vs. Cement* (1953), where the immense mineralization of nature is highlighted. This clearly raises the question of the future of the species.

Therefore: fundamentally, the species must no longer take the path of progress, but that of regression, and must not seek in science the path of salvation, for science has in fact become an instrument of repression and justification of this world (1964).

Inversion concerns not only the species as such but also the behavior of individuals. In the 1960s, the idea became more and more prevalent that it was not necessary to wait for the revolution to change it and thus allow the development of communism, but that its partisans had to reach, even before the revolution, a behavior compatible with the latter. Hence the central affirmation concerning above all the members of the party: it is necessary to behave as if the communist revolution was a fact, and the party, more and more thought of as a community party, is the prefiguration of communist society. The dynamic of behaving "as if" aims at non-dependence on this world. In other words, what prevails is not the data of struggle (not neglected), therefore of enmity, but the attempt to find another affirmation of men and women and, therefore, of the species.

Nowadays, various crises are intermingled with the phenomenon of the coronavirus pandemic whose fundamental causes go back to the break in continuity with nature, within the species, to its degeneration linked to its becoming outside nature, with the deployment of enmity that leads within it to the regression of solidarity, from concomitant affectivity to ever more intense isolation between individuals, making them vulnerable to infectious agents such as the coronavirus. The spread of the latter depends on the development of enmity within the species and in its relationship with nature.

It is only by carrying out the inversion, which keeps us in continuity with the revolutionary past and thus with Bordiga, that the species will be able to perpetuate its future.

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