GOODBYE MR. SOCIALISM

ANTONIO NEGRI

IN CONVERSATION WITH RAF VALVOLA SCELSI



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In conversation with Raf Valvola Scelsi
Translated from the Italian by Peter Thomas

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CONTENTS

1. Goodbye Mr. Socialism 9
2. *Tous ensemble!* From the Strike of a Metropolis to the Political Discovery of the Common 33
3. The Left, Peace, and Nonviolence: The Cruxes of an Unresolved Debate 49
4. Seattle: The Arrival of the Multitude 63
5. Chiapas and Political Work in the Net 75
6. Genoa: Epiphany of the New 93
7. Migrants, or the End of Workers' Internationalism 103
8. Iraq: Coup d'État in Empire 121
9. The Commune of Madrid 133
10. Lula: Governing with the Movements 149
11. Davos: The Communism of Global Capital 165
12. China is Near! 189
13. Iran: But Wasn't God Dead? 199
14. May Day: A Strange Precariat is Advancing 211
15. Italy: The Mediocre Anomaly 231

Lexicon 249

—Ciao, Toni, how are you? It's been a long time.

—Raf, you're still kicking around?

—Yeah, you know, the bad never die. You also seem to be doing well . . .

—Monsters stay beautiful; what causes them to lose their allure is the reality of Italian politics.

—Why? What have you got against Berlusconi? Or are you still discouraged by the Left . . . ?

—The Left? But who are they? They didn't even manage to defeat Berlusconi. That's what we need, no?

—This is precisely what I want to talk with you about—about how insipid the Left is.

—Why not? Let's talk about it; I'm also very concerned. This Berlusconi is a bully; he is pushing the pallid institutional representation of the Left—that is, of the honest people who work—toward a nervous breakdown. If Parliament has never functioned well, it certainly won't function now. And now is when we need someone who decides, a decision maker . . . I have the feeling we're about to witness again an old story—an exhausted democracy counterposed to an aggressive populism. The First Republic is finished, dishonorably. Still, even today it inspires some nostalgia . . . They were thieves, certainly, but they did not corrupt institutions as much as the current politicians and bosses do. The Second Republic stands for corruption, from any point of view you want to look at it; it's neoliberal postmodernity founded on the privatization and appropriation

of all public goods by private interests and on the perversion of public ethics.

—And the precariat . . . ?

—Yes, not only on the precaritization of living labor, but also on the basis of making the savings of workers more insecure, on increasing the misery of the pensioners. You know, it affects me, I'm almost a pensioner . . . And then Berlusconi wins the elections—he doesn't lose them at any rate—based on the promise to abolish the inheritance tax. It's sheer madness, the hara-kiri of the miserable.

—So you don't see a way out? You don't believe that the narrow victory of the Left still gives us a future?

—Unfortunately, no. While in Italy the Second Republic languishes between the alternatives of a flabby and weak Left and a strong fascist, populist, "Bushist" Berlusconi and company, there has now developed around the world a democratic opposition that goes beyond socialism. Latin America is liberating itself from the yoke of North American dependence; guerrilla warfare in Iraq checkmates neoconservative American unilateralism; China and India are asserting themselves in a strong way on the world markets; the small amount of intelligence that still exists in European capitalism struggles for a Europe that takes its distance from Bush; and further, the great alternative globalization movement has found its social base in the struggles of the precariat and intellectual workers. The French struggles of the last months show this. What happens here in Italy, on the other hand? We are dealing with a Left immunized against any hope of renewal and neutralized, practically and theoretically, with respect to any subversive struggle.

I. GOODBYE MR. SOCIALISM

RAF VALVOLA SCELSI: Nineteen eighty-nine, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of real socialism. Why did it fall? What happened to all of us when it fell?

ANTONIO NEGRI: I remember those great celebrations, the crowd that went over the Wall and simultaneously demolished it. Here at home I have a numbered piece of the Wall that was given to me by an old friend, a theologian. The demolition of the Wall and passing through the Brandenburg Gates were really exciting from many points of view, whatever the conclusions that we can draw from them today.

To my mind, 1989 corresponds to 1968. While 1968 had broken down the walls that closed our society, 1989 broke down the wall that defended real socialism, keeping it outside the world market.

So, as I was saying, I saw these joyful people on television who came from the other side to buy themselves a pair of shoes. Fundamentally, they were miserable in the new consumerist ideology, but all of that was nothing compared to the true joy they felt upon exiting that totalitarian world in order to find a little freedom.

A week later, Claus Offe came to see me in Paris. He is one of the major theoreticians of capitalist development and of the organizational forms of labor in Germany after World War II; one of the people closest to me in terms of the type of analysis that I had developed around the theoretical axis of workerism and with whom I had collaborated on scholarly projects. He came to see

me because I had invited him to one of my seminars. He was still extremely emotional. The evening that the Wall was falling, he left Hamburg and went to Berlin in his car with his little daughter. He told me about the immense joy of that adventure. It was enthusiasm not so much for German unification, a term that was proposed only much later on the political level—it was the joy that a border was eradicated, a ferocious and abstract limit sitting in our consciousness, inside a people, inside a civilization in the heart of Europe. Knowing the old divided Berlin, you know perfectly well what madness it was to cross the border inside the city, exactly like how today it's crazy to pass through the gates of Jerusalem or jump over the walls that are being raised all over the place in order to defend ourselves from the exterior, from the migrants, from the barbarians. In any case, Claus and I drank quite a bit that night, completely happy that this gross and totalitarian socialism was finally finished.

Yesterday, but also today, we were left with the question of the historical development of that form of socialism. For my part, I certainly don't participate in that nostalgia expressed, for example, by the director Wolfgang Becker in his nevertheless excellent *Good-Bye Lenin!* but also by other widespread attitudes in East Germany, like in Poland and in other ex-socialist countries, not to speak of the old Soviet Union, where nostalgia is complicated by resentment and is accompanied by the rebirth of a strong nationalism.

Beyond these aspects (which, according to me at any rate, are superficial), we need to ask ourselves why a massively planned economy and a socialist society weren't able to establish solid structures and to gain an enduring consensus.

SCELSI: What does a planned economy really mean?

NEGRI: I think it is important to emphasize that a planned economy is nevertheless a capitalist economy, that is, an economy for profit. Furthermore, a planned economy is always an economy in which the space for decision, though defined by public power, is managed by the enterprise. Personally, I lived in the West the dramas and the tension that many Western intellectuals have experienced with this type of problem. The best socialist minds of the West have grappled with the fundamentals of this problem (plan and profit, enterprise and development). That is, how do we determine (within a public decision by the State) the convergence of the interest of the enterprise and the cohesion, or the participation and the consensus, of the citizens-workers? I'm not sure, but I have the impression that the fall of the Soviet system was due to many elements, among which, however, the nonsolution of this theme appears to be fundamental. This is what we have to ask ourselves. In reality, I don't believe at all that an economically planned regime must be structurally incapable of gaining the consent of its subjects. Great economists of the past, realists and formalists, from [Karl] Marx to [Léon] Walras, have demonstrated not only the possibility, but also the viability of making an economically planned regime. Excellent economists immediately prior to our generation, like [John Maynard] Keynes and [Joseph] Schumpeter, have shown the viability and opportunity of economically planned regimes. So don't worry: a planned economy is completely possible and (perhaps) opportune. Having said that, from the historical point of view, the problem is another one. In the USSR, in its very genesis, planning had to resist an ever-more-insupportable military pressure to support an ever-more-difficult and evident resistance, beginning with always more compressed consumption. Later, we should have thanked the Soviet multi-

tude. Without their sacrifices, for example, the Nazis would have won the war and we would all speak German . . . But we didn't thank them. Rather, as soon as we were liberated from Nazism, we intensified the liberal hatred of them. Taking up the problem again from where we left it—that is, from the question of the planned economy—the lack was not there but in the relations of force. The Soviet Union didn't survive, not because its existence was an impossible dream, but because the Western strategy of closure and repression and antihumanist hate won.

According to me, the Soviet Union fell for two reasons. Let's deal with the first straight away. From 1917 onward, the capitalist West developed a strategy of military encirclement and of continuous compression of the resources that the Soviet Union had for growing and defending itself. Commercial encirclement, war, exclusion from markets, difficulties in supplies, cultural encirclement from the beginning.

The first phase of the construction of socialism, pursued until the first elaboration of the five-year plans, that is, until the second half the 1920s, was marked by military encirclement. And the Soviet revolution had to put up a bitter fight in order to survive—as, for that matter, does every revolution, because there isn't a great difference between what happened in Russia and the period immediately following the French Revolution.

In the second phase, beginning with extremely backward levels, there was a very heavy, strong, and sometimes inhuman attempt at accumulation. In short, the "Man of Marble." We aren't able to comprehend it even, so fast and accelerated was this process. Today we are able to consider the first phase of the construction of socialism only if we go back to the times of primitive accumulation in England or to the historical experience of certain

colonial countries, where primitive accumulation occurred with slavery. But the heroic and fixed figure defines the acceleration of the process of the Soviets, which is absolutely disproportionate in comparison with any other experience. Then there was the period of World War II, the third phase.

I am certainly not among those who are scandalized by the alliances of [Joseph] Stalin with the Nazis. Rather, it has always seemed to me to be a great element of strategic lucidity, above all if we think of the ambiguity of the great Western countries in confrontation with the USSR and the countries that surrounded the Soviet Union. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were very fascistic countries, in which the persecution of Jews and communists was continuous. These are things of which one prefers not to speak, but they are monstrous facts that really happened. Not to speak of Poland, where the massacre of Jews was completely covered up by a popular complicity that included antifascism itself. It is enough to see *Shoah*, [Claude] Lanzmann's film.

On the other hand, the attempt to accuse the Soviet Union of anti-Semitic attitudes in moments that weren't always decisive but important in its history is completely absurd. To put things back in proper historical perspective: American anti-Semitism was a social phenomenon infinitely more rooted and deep. However, these are things that history and the future will unfortunately continue to tell us.

Turning back to our story, and thus to the war, this is the moment in which the Soviets build the "great national unity" that manages to defeat the Nazi enemy: it was the Soviets who defeated the Nazis, and this is an extremely important fact.

What does socialism have to do with this? I don't know, but it is certainly bound up with it, because it draws our attention to that

great internal disequilibrium that is the product of popular tension in the construction of a socialist country confronted by the difficulty—or better, by the incapacity—to break certain types of accumulation, even against the background of national unity in wartime. But all of that, although important, is evidently not decisive. Within the disequilibrium of socialist accumulation there is also the incapacity to promote consumption to the same level as that of production. Stakhanovism, ideologically homogenous with consumerism, did not manage to balance the equation. Unbalanced development resulted from it: on the one hand, extremely advanced technologies, for example, atomic and spatial, which become elements of the project; and on the other hand, an internal social inequality as deep as it was miserable and, above all, a lack of freedom that was accentuated within that unbalanced development.

SCELSI: Your vision is therefore that Stalinism was a necessary choice?

NEGRI: In my opinion, Stalinism is something that is born in the intestines of history from primitive accumulation . . . It is something infamous and universal, just as much as fascism in Italy. It is, however, a phenomenon of modernization.

SCELSI: Therefore you have a revisionist reading of Stalinism, as a phenomenon of the modernization of capital.

NEGRI: I have a completely revisionist reading. The Bolshevik Revolution and the Stalinist Thermidor were formidable engines of modernization for Russia. After the emancipation of the serfs, the Soviets built the proletariat. Because the capitalists complained about it, they never managed to understand it. It seems

to me that only the proletariat had the dignity to protest against Stalinism. However, we can be sure that without Stalin, things wouldn't have gone beyond Tsarism. The only possibility of going beyond Stalin with respect to the Tsar—but I would also add ironically, of going beyond Mussolini with respect to [Giovanni] Giolitti—is to continue the revolution, to repeat it, to make it every time that you can, to root it in every crucial social location of domination. But this project was not possible in Russia due to its merciless encirclement by the capitalist countries.

SCELSI: Therefore, if there hadn't been the encirclement, it would've been possible . . .

NEGRI: I'm not the only one to think this. Rosa Luxemburg also had this position, even Max Weber thought this. The only interpretation that I think is unacceptable is [François] Furet's. For him, the revolution becomes a chronic illness, incurable; the institutional continuity of power and of capital (even if he doesn't ever call it that) always defeats subversive attempts to break historical time. Old reactionary ideologies, from Burke to [Alexis de] Tocqueville, from [Friedrich von] Gentz to [Juan] Donoso Cortés . . . I really can't tolerate this type of revisionism.

Behind this historiographical operation there is an ideology entirely circular in its logic, or the proposal of an American style of revolution, with the assumption that it was something entirely different. Confronted with this, historiographical conscience cannot but protest.

SCELSI: I agree, but why did the Communist leadership give up power without trying to defend itself?

NEGRI: The first time that I was in the Soviet Union, in 1960,

popular attention was monopolized by Laika, the dog in orbit around the earth. Everyone made a great commotion, particularly the children: "This dog will suffer, maybe they bring her back, maybe not . . ." The problem was that the regime enjoyed then almost total support. And all of the questions regarding internal opposition were linked to old motives. I don't know how to define them properly; today we would call them the "Chechen question" or "extreme Islamism," factors that then were completely minor, while today they express other things in different ideological contexts.

The people were still stronger than the ruling group. The multitude had lost twenty million and more of its brothers during the Great War against Nazism, and the ruling group already felt the people's cold breath on its neck. The ruling group, however, interpreted the multitude as evil and perverse: they didn't want to work, they wanted to spend, they only wanted butter.

SCELSI: Let's take the example of [Arthur] Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*: the arrogant attitude of the Party is evident here. It claimed to reason like a collective intellectual and therefore to represent the truth always. All contrary wills are thus suppressed, also those of important leaders, accused, in some cases, of being Titoists, in others, of being Trotskyists, others still, of being counterrevolutionaries, and thus in actual fact erasing the internal debate . . .

NEGRI: Stalinism erased organized political oppositions, not internal debate. I have always read Koestler's book as the testimony of an infinite pain, of being subjected to a terrible infamy. However, Stalinism is a much more subtle and modern phenomenon. It is a dictatorship of the majority (it could also be

democratic). It is not an exclusively Russian phenomenon, totalitarian in Asiatic terms. It is comparable more to the regime of Augustus than to that of Tiberius. This is an aspect that must be studied and revisited; it's a problem I've been dealing with recently in relation to China.

The class struggle in Russia was an extreme experience. To construct socialism is something monstrous: it is to attack the superstition of religions, the compounded interests of property and bourgeois ideology. In short, it's a very difficult thing.

SCELSI: That is true, but there are millions of dead . . .

NEGRI: There are, but there are also millions of dead in the genocide of Native Americans . . . Here we are dealing with another fundamental element of the crisis of the Soviet regime: that is, the fact that in defense of the regime and the national-military accumulation (as [Cornelius] Castoriadis called it), all the guarantees of freedom were reduced. From this emerges the paradoxical contradiction represented by the Gulag and its millions of dead: the people put in prison were precisely those the Soviets needed in order to develop not only electrification, but also the society's informational systems and automation in the factories. The Soviet Union committed the most atrocious act of political masochism that a country has ever committed. I don't believe in freedom as a disembodied right, I believe in freedom as productive force. It is here that the Soviet Union falls; here that socialism, as the collective management of capital, becomes weaker; here that we can identify the first wedge that many years later made the Berlin Wall collapse. I am trying to understand, the questions that they raise help me to understand, not to apologize for anything . . .

SCELSI: You spoke of compounded interests . . .

NEGRI: Aggressive, compounded interests . . . If we think of medieval Russia as it was described before 1905, and then of a country capable in 1960 of sending satellites into orbit after having won a war against the strongest army of Europe, in the center of an encirclement by the capitalist powers, in a context of class struggle developed in extreme terms, how can we not recognize that all this also produced a great, modern state organization, a system of organic mediation of representative functions and the reestablishment of a sovereignty, even though it became in the end a limit to the revolutionary process?

I hate the great sovereign machines, but from an historical point of view I cannot say that Napoleon was a pig. It isn't true. Napoleon is Napoleon, Stalin is Stalin, Churchill is Churchill, Roosevelt is Roosevelt. They aren't simply pigs, they are sovereigns. I loathe the hypocrisy of historiography, above all when it becomes propaganda . . . Innocent dead, how many have we seen! On the other hand, the category of innocence is very relative. The historical examples can go on infinitely; certainly, there was something monstrous—Stalinism—completely unacceptable for innumerable reasons. In other aspects, extremely productive. Its monstrous aspect was, at any rate, in large part provoked: the responsibility of Churchill in the initial siege of the newly born Soviet Union was as crucial as was his responsibility in creating the Iron Curtain against the Soviet Union, winner of the war. So what is the difference between Churchill and Stalin?

Having said this, we should add that the Soviet rulers were not defeated by the Iron Curtain but by the fact of having constructed an enormous collective intelligence and yet not being able to offer to that collective intelligence the *free instruments* [underlined three times] of expression.

In this regard, I remember that already at the end of the 1980s some American friends came to my place in Paris after having been in the Soviet Union. They told me that it was impossible to use a PC there, that there wasn't any education in using a computer, while in the United States such use had already been taking off for some time. In the USSR they were still bound to old information technology. They were in a political time warp.

SCELSI: Maybe because they still had a sacred vision of information technology . . .

NEGRI: No, it was already a society of equals that didn't ask for more than to have these instruments. But they weren't able to give them to them, because it would have meant giving them freedom. They were only able to defend the revolution without freedom; this was the illusion and the dictated madness of the system. So, the second fundamental reason for the crisis of real socialism: without freedom, because it had to be sacrificed, one had to spend three quarters of one's income in order to construct tanks, instead of producing butter. You have to get inside this; you have to imagine yourself in this situation if you want to understand it. Now, instead of having an income of a hundred, take one of fifty; however, additionally, you have the school, the hospital, which, even if they function badly, at least exist. You have a general level of culture without equal in the world. They start to construct real socialism in 1917 and finish in 1989. In the meantime, there are tremendous events: the First World War, which continues until 1925–26; from 1926 to 1936, more or less, the five-year plans start, but already we witness the transformation into a war industry; you have World War II, and we have already seen how much it cost the Russian people; you have 1956–57; and then it's over,

the encirclement is closed, and they make all the errors possible, they try to subjugate China in imperialist terms, repeat all the foolishness that any ruling class, closed and illiberal—in a word, prerevolutionary—would have acted out. And this all happened precisely when the pressure of the base of the people for freedom and development was at its strongest.

What a strange thing was that Soviet Communist Party! Sometimes it seemed to be merely an enormous administrative machine. It's as if you equated the Communist Party here in Italy with the entire Italian State. In that kind of administrative machine, the contradictions are all on the inside, just as is the case today in China. What is to be done? Enlarge the net of these machines? You understand that when we speak regarding this in Arendtian terms, in terms of social freedom and political freedom, these appear as what they are: empty and abstract concepts. We can't use them here. In Russia, in that moment, freedom meant something else: to eat, to be able to express yourself, to reproduce yourself and produce, and then to try not to die—concrete things. Social and political freedom is above all the power to confront conditions of material oppression, of misery, and of death. And to achieve this objective all for one and one for all. The experience of a freedom that gives you bread and eliminates war—the Russians didn't have it. Will they ever have it?

SCELSI: But there is also the nationalist factor. In the first constitution of the USSR, the different nationalities had political legitimacy. I am thinking of the Asiatic nationalities, of Islamic identities held together by the conference of Baku in the 1920s. In recent decades, on the other hand, nationalisms have exploded. How did this happen?

NEGRI: They were all communists; even the Islamic identities were contained within this project. A "communist" ruling class no longer belongs to any nationality. That communist Soviet project was an internationalist project; it became less so during the war for reasons of defense. The great Russian nation and the nationalities were readmitted to political debate because they produced soldiers and goods for the war. [Sergei Mikhailovich] Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible* symbolizes very well this inspiration . . . also religions . . .

To unify the nation even with the kulaks, notwithstanding the repression of the thirties, to unify it even with the Islamists, Stalin and the Communist Party launched the slogan, "We'll reckon accounts later, now we have to defend the country."

SCELSI: However, this contradiction between cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and nationalism . . .

NEGRI: I am interested in historical concepts only if they are considered within a structure, a determinate situation. If I have to analyze an historical episode, I need to recognize reality objectively. In some elementary aspects, the historical approach is analogous to the study of the life of an insect. Now, we can say that in this event there were contradictory positions, however, we can't maintain that these positions were the correct ones and the others were mistaken. Because the correct and the mistaken don't exist in the historical event . . . things simply happen. The problem is therefore in making other things happen, which is not different from making history, or at least in demonstrating that other things had the potential to happen.

For example: I study modernity and I study it in philosophy because this is my trade. I normally define a line that I call tran-

scendentalist or transcendental that goes from [René] Descartes to [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau to [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel; on the other hand, I trace an extremely strong materialist and immanentist line that goes from [Niccolò] Machiavelli to [Benedict de] Spinoza to Marx. My preference for this second interpretative line is clear. I maintain that inside this current there were extremely important historical, political, and subversive acts or attitudes: the genesis itself of the Workers' Movement, for example, of the history of the most radical forms of Enlightenment. At the same time, we also need to say that this line was defeated by transcendentalism. This is what it means to make history.

After this, I try to re-make that line, but my attempt is inside a completely different historical context, without demonizing one to the detriment of the other. For me, some were correct, others were mistaken. This is also the case when we think of the history of socialism, of real socialism in particular. It is not a monster, it is a product of our power but above all of our weakness, of our capacity to hurt ourselves. It was indeed a failure but a particularly special failure.

SCELSI: With history of the "if" we don't of course decide anything, but what would have happened if socialism had won in Germany, which at the time was the most industrialized country?

NEGRI: In my opinion, it would have been even worse. It is not the fact of being the most industrialized country that guarantees the model of socialism; just try to imagine what the Germans would have done! It's just like when someone says today that the United States is the only country in which we can really make the revolution. Let's imagine that we live in the future and that the revolution happened in the first half of the twenty-first century in

the United States. Do you think that it could be a better situation than that of the Soviet past? Yes or no, we can't make predictions. History is crazy, and the revolution wins by fits and starts, due to ruptures, to transformations of conscience, due to the liberation of singularities.

Today we have a new, good opportunity for the liberation of singularities, represented by the social expansion of new forms of cooperative and reticular communication . . . It is precisely this that the parties and the Left in particular don't understand because they are still bound to an old system of centralized and sovereign decision. This doesn't mean that socialism today is "Soviets plus Internet." I mean to say only that I believe that the inventors of new models of communicative living are much more socialist than capitalist, much more tied to a concept of solidarity than to that of profit.

SCELSI: I'll ask you instead another "absurd" question: if socialism had been in the epoch of computers, if instead of coming before the information age, it had come afterward? Because, ultimately, one of the difficulties was a problem of communication, of a management of needs that was too bureaucratic. With more agile management, thanks to informational transmission, maybe the bureaucratic structure of the party could have been simplified without having to pass necessarily through a centralized structure of command . . .

NEGRI: This is a fundamental question that all the reformists inside the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia, and the countries of the East asked themselves: the problem of speeding up the system, a question that, however, became obsessive in the fifties and sixties.

The problem is that at a certain point the consolidation of socialism defeated the revolutionary process, holding back, blocking that threshold of social and political movement that was born from the struggle against power, against exploitation. Consolidating itself, socialism obtained enormous results. In the first place, it demonstrated that it was possible. In the second place, it imposed on the bourgeois economy a radical modification (the capitalist New Deal, as we will see later). But in its consolidation is also betrayal—corruption in the place of generation, bureaucratization of power instead of its constituent liberation. To speed up the system is at this point a hypothesis of reopening the class struggle, a reopening of the class struggle within the revolutionary process. The revolution continues.

SCELSI: From an historiographical point of view, revisionists from [Ernst] Nolte to Furet therefore are correct to read the fascist response first and then, later, the Nazi response, as a response to the revolutionary cycle of struggles after World War I and to reread history from 1917 onward as a long civil war between classes.

NEGRI: Certainly, I write that, and I agree that we should reread the period after 1917 as a long civil war between classes. In this context, the problem of freedom is much less important than that of how to manage development. While this discrepancy between freedom and development in socialism became intolerable at a certain point, in the capitalist system it was in part resolved by the American New Deal. If they had considered things from this point of view, that is, in terms of the discrepancy between freedom and development, Nolte and Furet probably wouldn't have served us up their poisoned nonsense of capitalist metaphysics.

SCELSI: Today, after 1989 (when according to Eric Hobsbawm, the twentieth century that began in 1914 ends), in the new century, the definition of the "short century" is back in vogue. Is it a correct periodization?

NEGRI: According to me, it is perfect. The twentieth century finished after 1968. It commences in 1917 and, if you like, finishes in 1989. However, for me it arrives at its conclusion in 1968. Because it is from 1968 that we start to consider the possibility of producing wealth and freedom at the same time. In 1989 the socialists also arrive at this point, but they were so stunned from the roar of the epochal transition that they immediately became—without ifs, ands, or buts—apologists for capitalism.

SCELSI: We have thus defined a century much shorter than that given by [Eric] Hobsbawm's reading. But in this historical moment is it still possible to use the word "socialism" for the new generations? The word "socialism" today seems to be discredited, and not only in its party definition, which is a minor reduction in comparison to the important concepts we are discussing. It is the word itself that is discredited and with it the socialist ideal—the collective management of the means of production aiming at individual and collective liberation in order to construct a world where, to use the famous phrase from Exodus, milk and honey pour forth. Does the word "socialism" still have a political space?

NEGRI: The word "socialism" has huge importance in the history of the world. Therefore, nothing is more probable than this word continuing to make the rounds (just as in France the survivors of Bonapartism are still around) on the margins of the current ideology. The rest depends on whether it has a good editor or not.

The idea that there can be a just and egalitarian management of capital, however, remains a mad idea: capital can't survive without exploitation. The priests and socialists always thought that there could be a just measure of exploitation. No, in reality, there isn't. There isn't space for a correct relation between development and command, or for "fair and sustainable" capitalism. It is the very concept of the capitalist verticalization of power itself that is in crisis, beyond the concrete forms, measures, and figures in which it develops.

Now, the problem rather is to ask ourselves if it is possible today to use the word "communism"—communism understood as the radical modification of subjects forced to work and as the constitution of a new historical time, of the construction of the "common," as in the *common* capacity to produce and reproduce the social in freedom. While socialism is dialectical and now a bad memory, communism is optimism of reason, as well as true dystopia. If utopia is the view fixed to an ideal that is outside the world, dystopia is the strong desire that is inside the powers of the current mode of production, thus within our real horizon. It isn't an accident that the word "communism" is being slowly reconstructed. For an analogy, remember the transition from the early days of the Church, marked by martyrdom and defeats, to the patristic period. From a theoretical point of view, an enormous mass of thought and development of theory is converging around the attempt at a definition of communism as the only alternative to postmodernism and as the beginning of a new great cycle of civilization.

SCELSI: However, in that case, the question appears to be the inverse: the Church was affirmed by becoming a state, while in the case of socialism the Church had already become a state.

NEGRI: Sure, but communism isn't Christianity. After a very confused early period in which Christianity didn't have an institutional form, at a certain moment it configured a theory and a politics that went toward power. It is an historical transition that lasts for two or three centuries, from the third to the fifth century. It is the Constantinian turn from which the Church has never liberated itself. But we aren't in this condition, on the contrary, we are free from our Constantine, from Stalinism, from the taste of power. The communists today are alone and potent.

Today, a type of extensive *koinè* is being created, also from a theoretical point of view that includes very diverse cultural contexts: for example, postcolonial studies, some currents of feminism, popular informational or computer cultures, etc.

It is a great phenomenon. Inside it is an ideal of communism and of radical egalitarianism that no longer has any type of qualification, for example, of an anarcho-individualistic type. There is a form of profound syncretism, as in the relation between singularity and institution. There is no type of particular diffidence in relation to the institution. There is a use of openings in the bureacracy . . . a complete secularism, the turning upside down of the order of command and the consequent affirmation that every decision comes from the base. We are therefore speaking of the attempt to overcome the most refined forms of bourgeois representation that have always been imposed from above.

Another fact is the radical egalitarianism that increasingly emerges, beginning from the base, with the demand for the rights of immigrants or the social wage for precarious workers. In short, the opening of the borders and implicit cosmopolitanism. They are things that are at the base of a sort of new enlightenment, a biopolitical enlightenment that traverses all the regions of life and

expresses a new concept of reason. Today, all people that reason seek a definition between these problems or, better, a solution to them. No longer a functional and instrumental superannuation of the capitalist order, but a transition, a concrete transition, of solidarity in the biopolitical perspective. When I say "of solidarity," I mean the articulation of subjectivity within the common. This is the new egalitarianism, which has nothing to do with the organic, with the indistinct. Neither is it a machine for the flattening out of differences. On the contrary, it is open to singularities that live and produce within this common network. To be equal is to have equal possibilities and capacities of expression that are effective and that exist within the totality of the activities of the multitude. Production and freedom are born in the network. The network is always a network of singularity, expression, and production of differences. This is perhaps the religion of times to come.

SCELSI: Let's come back to us. Totalitarianism is a category that was elaborated by [Hannah] Arendt in the 1950s in order to describe the Soviet regime "appropriately." In reality, however, it was a case of a theoretical elaboration extremely functional to the ideological campaign then underway at the height of the Cold War.

NEGRI: Actually, these ideas of Hannah Arendt were already around in the 1950s, when I was a teaching assistant at Padua and then a professor who was active in Justice and Freedom.*

Now, the concept of totalitarianism is absolutely ideological. Not because there isn't dictatorship and the will of power to sub-

* An antifascist group.

sume the entire society under its control, and not because dictatorships don't have a real efficacy. Rather, because resistance and difference disappear in the concept of totalitarianism; that is, the ethical and epistemological element, cognitive and political, disappear. And when a category produces effects of this type it is better to abandon it. If it describes without allowing differences to operate, it is itself totalitarian.

Further, when Arendt maintains that the American Revolution was more important than the French Revolution because it is supposed to have organized the relation between social forces in political terms, thus constructing a democratic political space in practice, while the French Revolution is supposed to have deluded itself about being able to organize social relations that were in themselves unable to be systematized, relaunching uncontainable subversive processes . . . well, then you have to throw your hands up in the air. Because it isn't true, first, that the American Revolution was carried out by the Founding Fathers without any interest other than that of organizing the "political colloquium," as Arendt tells the story; in the second place, it absolutely isn't true that the French or the Russians didn't have specific political interests (and "determinant constitutional desires") because they were completely linked to social interest in its brutality and linked to its immediate mediation. The French and Russian revolutions are just as much for freedom and against oppression and death as the American Revolution, if not more so.

Arendt's thesis is based on the idea that, on the one hand, there was a great revolution that invents the political space and, on the other, a small revolution, the French, that in reality was supposed to have given space to corporative interests and egotistical will and those social actors that wanted to expropriate for themselves the

wealth of others. And all this appears to be contradictory, sometimes almost a caricature, so much so as to make one think that Arendt was not very resistant to the social pressures in which she worked. On the other hand, for example, her evaluations of Luxemburg or the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 were extremely interesting and intelligent, while her antitotalitarian books certainly aren't at the same level. The things that she says about the theory of action, ethics, and the categories of [Immanuel] Kant are very good, but in general Arendt's other studies suffer from the climate of the Cold War. It is a reflection that I make systematically in my lectures in France, a country in which speaking badly of Arendt has always been considered a little blasphemous . . .

In short, it seems to me that categories like socialism, Stalinism, fascism, and totalitarianism are too generic in order to be able to add something to the knowledge that we have of historical reality. Instead, it seems much more interesting to me to think that the struggle between the poor and the rich, between the proletarians and the capitalists invests and qualifies these concepts in a better way, in the way that Machiavelli did.

SCELSI: Another discipline elaborated in the 1950s, perhaps contextual to the analysis of Soviet totalitarianism conducted by Arendt, was cybernetics. In reality, in the 1950s, confronted with the hypothesis of economist and determinist explanations proper to Marxism, the invention of cybernetics proposed an ideological paradigm in which the explanation of events had a type of circular and complex development.

NEGRI: Perhaps it is worthwhile to be ironic about this type of opposition to so-called Marxist economism and determinism. Actually, the Soviet materialists had already anticipated cybernet-

ics in the 1920s, when those great cybernetic experiences occurred that would later allow the launch of the Sputnik in the 1950s, thus beating the Americans to the finish line. Without such a theoretical base, these events wouldn't have been imaginable. But the greatness of Russian and Soviet materialism went well beyond this: it is a creative materialism, within which you can find the surprise of a [Lev Semyonovich] Vygotsky who anticipates [Michel] Foucault, or a [Mikhail Mikhailovich] Bakhtin who anticipates [Gilles] Deleuze . . . Having said this, I don't want to deny that in Russia the Engelsian manuals of Bucharin, Zhdanovist paranoia, or the worst diamat* also prospered. But let's move slowly. The thing that is important to emphasize in any historical analysis isn't the intensity or the madness of domination, but the force of the resistances.

SCELSI: A final query on the question of socialism. You were saying that in the Soviet Union and in the countries of the East there was a correspondence between party and people, party and nation, and that the party machine, as the machine of the state, was implicated inside the social body. It is an explanation, therefore, that gives an account of why Eastern communist parties didn't open fire in 1989. Is there a distance between them and the Western communist parties and, in general, the parties that referred to the ideal of socialism in the West? The question is: what do the communist, socialist, or social democratic parties in Western Europe do with the idea of socialism today?

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* *Diamat* is an abbreviation for dialectical materialism. It is used in particular to refer to Stalin's codification of "dialectical materialism" as the official philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. More generally, it was used to refer to the (philosophical) communist orthodoxy of the communist parties that remained closely affiliated to the third international and later cominform.

NEGRI: These socialists of ours are nothing but rascals: they have gone from the fetishism of the Soviet Union and real socialism to the total abandonment of any prospective transformation of life and society. The awful thing is that the bureaucratic interpretation that these gentlemen gave to the ideas and the expressions of real socialism has rapidly transformed into cynicism: they have remained Stalinists, but they aren't socialists anymore.

2. *TOUS ENSEMBLE!* FROM THE STRIKE OF A METROPOLIS TO THE POLITICAL DISCOVERY OF THE COMMON

SCELSI: Paris, the big strike of 1995. You were living in the French capital back then. Can you recall the episode for us?

NEGRI: It was a strike for two fundamental reasons. First, we were faced with an attempt to privatize some parts of the French railway network. Second, there was also an attempt to modify the pension plan for the workers of the RATP (the public transport company in Paris).

It was a strike triggered by the railway workers but that subsequently merged with the needs of all the workers in the transport sector. The strike posed, for the first time in France in an absolutely central way, the question of deregulation and privatization in the trade union debate; but—and this is the really important fact—it was a mobilization that directly involved, in a participatory way with displays of solidarity, the entire metropolitan population of Paris. While in the past strikers who addressed the problem of public service—transport services in particular—were easily isolated from a political point of view, this time the public lined up not only with the *cheminots* and the workers of the *métro*, but started to organize solidarity in order to ease the inconvenience. In all of the zones in the belt around Paris—it was October, November—cars headed for Paris stopped and picked up commuters waiting under the shelters for the buses

that didn't come. The cars stopped and filled up with people, carrying them along the great axis of Parisian traffic and into the factories. Shifts and hours were modified according to the times people arrived. And you need to remember that all of this happened in a situation of frost, cold, and terrible difficulties. It was a mobilization, on the other hand, punctuated every Saturday by very beautiful demonstrations—beautiful also for the fireworks created by bands of *cheminots* who arrived with antifog lamps, marching to the sound of tambourines. An ensemble of things that defined a fundamental and definitive mobilization around a metropolitan sense of construction of the common and of the collective interest.

It was no longer a case of the interests of only the railway workers or drivers; here it was claimed that the transport network was ours and shouldn't be touched, that you couldn't privatize it, "*tous ensemble.*"

It was remarkable. In the zones of the belt around Paris like Saint-Denis or La Courneuve (today at the center of the urban revolts against the police), where there were the great bus depots (remember that the Parisian transport system involves eight million people), the depots remained completely open. People stopped to speak, and there were no pickets or surveillance, but no buses exited. This fact is even more important because these were small cities with serious social problems, where genuine gangs, sometimes violent, controlled the territory. Before the strike there were continually clashes between these gangs and the drivers, followed by protest strikes by the bus lines because the driver had been hit. The *tous ensemble*, everybody together, completely changed the horizon of social behavior: it really was a magic pair of words.

SCELSI: And the Left?

NEGRI: Faced by this order of questions and perspectives, the Left was completely unable to confront the problem. The Left was (and is) in a form of decline, hobbled by what they call the "third way," a sort of Blairian post-Thatcherism, marked by the classical politics of two phases: first accept privatization and the rules of the world market and then, after having paid the price, reconstruct a political relation with that which workers consider the common. The complete insufficiency of this strategy has been fundamentally demonstrated by a very simple fact: the problem isn't privatization or deregulation, but the total incapacity to construct democratic instruments of management and self-management, in more or less articulated and sophisticated ways, for the maintenance and the development of common goods at times when the concept and the experiences of the common become central once again. When I speak of "the common," I sometimes prefer to say "common goods" in the plural because in the singular you risk brushing up against a catholic, organic idea that fades off into theology and into preexisting natural or supernatural values. This has nothing to do with that, but with common constructions fundamental for the productivity of a system, things that either capitalism appropriates or that are used directly by the community. Today, a city is in itself a source of production: the organized, inhabited, and traversed territory has become a productive element just as worked land once was.

Increasingly, the inhabitant of a metropolis is the true center of the world, the anthropological essence par excellence, the ideal type of the twenty-first century, even if some sociologists (and conservative politicians) say that it is necessary to begin with the city and not the metropolis, because the city is still supposed to give

you a human design, while in the metropolis you fall into this disorganized, elusive, chaotic mass, which impedes any order . . . Modern illusions—there isn't the city anymore; there is only the metropolis . . . or, on the other hand, the village. But it's opportune to let the poets speak of its solitude. And it is good that it is like this: long live the metropolis and its multitude!

It is true, on the other hand—not trying to mock Einstein's formula—that where there is mass, there is energy. This is fundamental in the conception of the common, which isn't ever a deposit, but energy and power. It is capacity of expression. And the metropolitan citizen knows this.

SCELSI: The city seen, finally, a little as [Charles] Baudelaire saw it, as occasion, as opportunity, as place of creative destruction, not only as annihilation. The need was and is to destroy the cage of gray everyday life, its times, its routines . . .

NEGRI: We have enormous problems here. You were talking about the city as creative destruction . . . Yes, from many points of view, but that which is awfully important for the city in the passage from modernity to postmodernity, from Weber to [Georg] Simmel, from [Walter] Benjamin to [Henri] Lefebvre, from [Saskia] Sassen to us—well, in the metropolis, in this enormous accumulation of services, what is very important is that the city is in metamorphosis, that the city in itself becomes productive, and that the metropolitan network integrates communication. To give meaning to communication, to the relations that communication determines is perhaps possible also from an abstract, telematic point of view. But what is important to emphasize is that the relation between bodies becomes fundamental in the city/metropolis. When you say "common good" you speak of something that is

now biopolitical, that is to say, in the metropolis there is an integration of the corporeal and the political, an ensemble of relations that was constructed and is consciously renovated in the process of communal life. We are dealing with a central element of our daily evaluation of life. But these are arguments that the Left doesn't want to understand. Moreover, it goes against a tradition consolidated in its own time, because in the pre-Fordist epoch the great experiments of social and productive cooperation were fundamental in the construction of socialism. It is said that the advent of the productive phase connotated by the mass worker has definitively destroyed that form of cooperation. We know the consequences that our cooperative members scandalously derive from this: today, cooperation itself is a capitalist institution. So, the logic goes, let us take the BNL by using Unipol.*

The so-called democratic party that they have in mind takes up, on the one hand, the worst aspects of old socialism and, on the other, the worst aspects of neoliberalism.

SCELSI: In the nineteenth century, cooperation and mutual assurance societies were a central element in the practices of workers' solidarity. Today, we are talking again about the need to return to those experiences, also as a consequence of the now-evident attack on the social state that, however—it is good to remember—is the result of the so-called social compromise reached in the thirties between the working class and the bosses. Isn't it necessary maybe to rethink in a creative and active way those old organizational experiences of the workers' movement?

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* Unipol is an Italian association of cooperatives founded in 1962 and specializing in insurance. In late 2005 and early 2006, it attempted to take over the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) and was subsequently defeated amid scandal and accusations of corruption.

NEGRI: For the moment, as they say, our men of the Left have returned to it only in a speculative form, doing the worst things or, in an alternative form, trying to play entirely on an ulterior appropriation of proletarian needs (I'm thinking, for example, of the management of pension funds). In reality, when you say the "common," you oppose all of this and you put in play the distinction between public and private; when you speak of "common" you don't think of the public, but of something that isn't either private or public. Real socialism (like Jacobinism before it) confused the common with the public, that is, it reduced it to property of the State or to service of the State—a dispositif that was developed in all socialist and welfarist practice. The project and the definition of the common consists instead in overcoming both the concept of the private and that of the public, in going beyond these two categories to arrive at communal management: it's everyone together, and this isn't a utopia.

From the juridical point of view, you could proceed immediately to a definition of the common in these terms. For example, there is no doubt that large businesses of public services like those that operate in a regime of a quasimonopoly have indices or parameters of community. It's enough to think of postal services or electricity or infrastructures. If you think further of more civilized countries, these infrastructures have assumed for a long time the function of structuring territories for the purpose of living together decently, etc.

Many subjects and experts with political roots in 1968 are today working on the theme of the new municipalities. I'm thinking of the urbanist Alberto Magnaghi, who is developing this point very well, or the issue of the journal *Esprit* focused precisely on these themes. Certainly, there are elements of ingenuity in this

type of elaboration, but they begin to show effectively what the common is. It is a reflection that has also affected, even if only in part, the French trade union movement. And the experience of the Paris strike remains fundamental. To see a great metropolis like Paris act in this way—maybe the only European city to have a global dimension, even larger than London from the point of view of aggregation—to see it withstand (relying on itself) almost three months without public transportation—well, it's like being confronted, really, by a small commune.

SCELSI: Already in Marx there is a reflection on the problem of the common good, when he deals with the phenomenon of the enclosures, that is, when the common lands were reenclosed and privatized in the period between the fourteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century. For Marx, this forced appropriation of the common good laid the foundations for the so-called primitive accumulation of capital. On the other hand, this process is still happening today, in particular, in the third world, where, beyond the land, essential resources of life like water and other goods such as petroleum and rare minerals are being privatized.

Furthermore, in India in particular, the question of seeds has become one of the most contested terrains of conflict. Seemingly, it is a question that involves very complex aspects like biogenetic research. However, the fact that sterilized seeds are invented, imposed, and administered by a ferocious application of intellectual property rights is directly related to the right of people to manage their own lives by means of traditional, collective knowledge that has been consolidated in the village over the course of centuries.

It seems to me that in *Multitude* what you most insist on regarding the concept of the common good is not so much

regarding goods that are freely available in nature, but regarding the result of our work and our activity. What is at work here is more a productivist logic or, at any rate, a logic of prospecting for the future, almost a construction of the conditions that will be required for us to have a future.

NEGRI: When, during the many journeys I've made recently, I spoke with people who were dealing with these problems in the most diverse situations, I realized that it is much easier to be in agreement regarding the case, in relation to concrete determinant conditions, than to speak in the abstract. For example, the problem of the reappropriation of great natural resources like petroleum, gas, copper, or water in some countries of Latin America is linked to the transformation of a collective mode of thinking about nature. Thus, there isn't—in the political demands of the common—a fetishism of nature in the sense of not putting it on the market to keep it for itself; on the contrary, what wins here and imposes itself is the idea of a different development. Development certainly wasn't invented by capitalism. Capitalism invented only accelerated development and defined it in abstract terms (monetarily, financially). But the idea of development has, in fact, always existed because it regards the relation between man and nature. The problem is to understand how development can occur in the future for people who are liberated from capitalism. In nature, development occurs by means of solidarity. If you leave a child alone, it dies. Solidarity stabilizes the relation between poverty and wealth by means of the love that it gives to the weakest—not in general, but to the weakest—part of ourselves (like children). From this point of view, the capitalist function in the enclosures and the great processes of ferocious and savage accumulation, of both large natural territories and of natural resources

of energy as well as physical common spaces, works in exactly the opposite direction.

The same is the case in the example of the seeds that have always been modified by peasants. But here we are confronted with the expropriation of knowledge and an imposition. [Michael] Hardt has worked a lot on the paradox of peasant work as immaterial labor and on the idea of climatic science, that is, a peasant knowledge now completely immaterial that was totally computerized in the last years. The relation between land and production has been completely mediated by the computerization of agricultural work. This is a part, in the terms of our discourse, of the attempt to give power a figure more multitudinous than that of the individual (measured, that is, according to labor time), immediately abstract and immediately common. Thus, as in the case of other productions, struggles in agriculture depend on the capacity to appropriate for oneself (as multitude) the control of computerized dimensions in such a way that agricultural production becomes something common, subtracting it from processes of privatization, as happened in the case of genetically manipulated seeds.

But apart from this, today there are many other things afoot. In relation to the enclosures, it is enough to think of what is happening to the real estate market. Territories aren't valued anymore on the basis of their vital function, but on the basis of a market stabilized outside any singularly fixed value. Let's look at the case of Île de Ré in the Atlantic Ocean. In the last years, it has become one of the most sought-after places by people who are looking for exclusive situations. There was a case that exploded regarding this. There was a resident, a person who lived on a minimum-assistance income and who had a small shack on this island. In

reality, he didn't ever go there, but at a certain point he was taxed a sum equivalent to twenty-five times the value of the minimum wage in France (RMI*) because the tax had been calculated according to the property values of the island. It's a textbook case of the application of the flat tax that even [Margaret] Thatcher couldn't put in place. [Angela] Merkel had proposed it in the course of the German election campaign, and that cost her a good six electoral points. In France, some want to introduce it in local administrations. There is an immediate effect in this modern, and at the same time classical, form of enclosure. At this point, that poor guy can't go stay in that house on the island anymore because he isn't able to pay that tax. The result is that he finds himself excluded—a case that in certain respects recalls the stories that Mike Davis tells about Los Angeles. This is modern enclosure, or exclosure. It isn't only water, seeds, or resources of energy or of development. We also have to fight for alternatives on the terrain of land property.

SCELSI: Regarding Mike Davis: In one of his books on the growing presence of Latinos in the USA, he thinks about the mobility of the border. For the Latino migrant, it isn't enough to cross the Río Bravo, which officially marks the border between Mexico and the United States, in order to escape misery. The border follows the routes of migrants inside the metropolis. In Los Angeles, for example, the border becomes almost a second nature that segments and separates the spaces of habitation: here the Latinos, there the others . . . In short, it isn't easy to leave the border behind . . .

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* Revenu minimum d'insertion.

NEGRI: There is a joke about two guys from the Maghreb who ask each other which metropolises they know. Now, the first says, "Algeria and Casablanca," and the other, "Gare du Nord" . . . Why Gare du Nord? Because in Paris, Gare du Nord is the station where the simple tariff of transport finishes for those who come from the *banlieue*. Beyond that point, you have to pay again to go further. This is a limit but also the point at which you are once again in struggle, where the border, symbolic or material, determines a reaction to its stupid lack of meaning or, better, to the fullness of its repressive function. To multiply the borders, a fundamental capitalist technique in the metropolis, means therefore to produce new struggles, new occasions of rupture. This is class struggle today.

SCELSI: Let's go back to the theme of the common good, to the question of why the Left doesn't think about and doesn't deal with this terrain . . .

NEGRI: The Left has the skeleton of capitalism in its cupboard, as it was born from an objectivist and determinist interpretation of Marx's *Capital*. The leaders of the Left would like to be bosses, and because they can't do it in a private capacity, they do it in a public capacity in the State. Going more deeply, these leaders have never understood that capital is the concept of a relation, of a struggle. Or even worse, if they have understood it, they have decided to be a part of it by becoming one of those who command. Socialism isn't anything other than the statist transformation of capitalism, which is then charged up with the nation, the people, etc. They have never imagined the common if not, just like the capitalists, as something that is appropriated. The metropolitan commons—that which the citizens produce, the style of life, the joy of the

street, the cooperation and reciprocal help, enthusiasm, and the comfort of being together—they call it "positive externality," to be reappropriated for the profit of business. The metropolis is thought of as the colony of capital.

SCELSI: I want to deal with the question of knowledge understood as a common good. It is a theoretical constellation that concerns, on the one hand, open software and therefore the possibility of having available programs generated by collective labor and then distributed under public license, like GPL;* on the other hand, I'm also thinking of those scientific researchers at the base who make their work available on the Internet with the purpose of sharing the results of research, sharing libraries, and sharing archives. It is something even more worthy of merit considering the fact that we are in the presence of a growing process of privatization of the results of scientific research. I think it's worthwhile reflecting on this: we are witnessing an unprecedented phase regarding the concept of the common good that also has validity in the field of production.

NEGRI: There is a common good that is incorporated in the activity that is constitutive of value and of society the more immateriality or, in general, the cognitive aspects of work become fundamental. From the moment in which you begin to go from an economy of sustenance to an economy of surplus, cognitive work always becomes more fundamental. It is a productivity that isn't measurable anymore. It is a case of a further transition beyond the economistic conception of the real. Today, the latter doesn't make sense anymore because accumulation occurs by

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* General Public License.

means of leaps that are aleatory and sudden on the basis of extreme tensions, of thresholds of surplus of knowledge beginning with those that modify entire forms of living. This is the concept of the common that I like because it follows from Marx's testimony that it is the development of man that explains that of the ape and not vice versa. Today, we need to work like scientists who put more into the common than they accumulate.

SCELSI: We were speaking about the privatization of scientific knowledge . . . An emblematic case is that regarding the PCR, the polymerase chain reaction, and more generally, all the cutting-edge research on biogenetics, among which is the mapping of the human genome. Scientists like [Kary] Mullis have been attracted by private poles of research, which were then listed on the stock exchange, in a breakneck race to patent things that in the end concern the life of us all.

NEGRI: The reaction of the Left to these things, when there is one, is a moralistic one, that is, superstitious. Further, you are faced by transversal reactions, like Catholic or Islamic ones: "The world is flat" or "Darwin is a delinquent" or "Don't touch life," which testify to a complete incapacity to construct scientific and political alternatives to superstition. In fact, the way to oppose the Genome Project (that is, the capitalistic use of the source of life) doesn't consist in saying, "Don't touch me because I'm a creature of God." This is, to put it lightly, a reactionary way of posing the theme of the common good. Now, the relation the Left has stabilized with religion consists in continuously winking on the sly at superstition. But this is exactly what we can't do anymore. The only respect that we can have for religion is that of driving it forward, toward greater comprehension, beyond the

condemnation of Galileo, by not giving in to its historical comprehension.

Having said this, the question of the privatization of knowledge, and thus the extraction of relative surplus value from the cooperation of intelligence, contains an intimate contradiction because capital, in order to function, has to rest, on the one hand, on a freedom of subjections that can produce cognitive surplus, but on the other hand, it excludes subjects from the redistribution of the social wealth that this surplus produces.

SCELSI: Among the questions that you have touched upon, that of the juridical character has in my opinion crucial importance. Let's take, for example, the corpus regarding the rights of the author. In Italian law in particular the space conceded to the public domain is strict. There isn't much more there than the possibility of constructing public libraries. In Italian law, there isn't the possibility of configuring a public-domain environment for software. There is therefore a problem of juridical definition and a lack of conceptual tools.

NEGRI: On this front there are many works (Lawrence Lessig and others) that have gone forward in the juridical construction of the common. I have the impression that if there existed the political will, the juridical definition of the common would be affirmed easily, even within a context that would necessarily be contentious. We would be able at least to identify a large new area for discussion.

We need to go from a conception of public monopoly to one of common management of the public good. This is the first transition. Public service according to the French model, which was the first to be codified, is born with the definition of monopoly and its

attribution to the State. Therefore, we first need to overcome management of a public character, classically that of the State. From this point of view, Anglo-Saxon law could give us great help in the construction, among other things, of a right of agency, of action, in order to tear the good away from statal management—to tear away the good in order to consider it as dynamic and constituted by actors. When we have constructed this precedent, there will no longer be many problems with translating it into terms of common law. But you can't do everything on a juridical level. It is the movements, in fact, that express claims and rights for determining what is fair and what isn't, and possibly for enlarging or restricting the limits that value and disvalue request. Right is always concrete, but every time it is presented in public it is always abstract, *dixit* Marx. But it isn't a given that the abstract always manages to contain the concrete, and in this business of the common you can't *not* recognize that the public sphere is now really limited to treating the infinite claims of subjectivities that demand on this terrain new rights and a new conception of justice. The computer world, maybe, will be able to become one of the many objective determinations necessary, homogeneous, internal to the structure of capital; for now, it isn't that yet. It is a dimension that represents the common in its large and productive sense. It is a totality of singularities, a multiplicity of differences, a space of intertwinings and linguistic constructions. This is perhaps the most explicit example of how the new right of the common should be configured. The juridical form needs to submit to the concreteness of always innovative and always singular trajectories that constitute new common experiences. We need a common law that isn't only an indigenous renewal of ancient common rights, but on the contrary, a futuristic horizon of freedom.

3. THE LEFT, PEACE, AND NONVIOLENCE: THE CRUXES OF AN UNRESOLVED DEBATE

SCELSI: I would ask you to begin to think about the relation between the Left and the war. It seems to me to be an important litmus test. [Massimo] D'Alema, at the time of the intervention in Kosovo, loudly called for the institution of a European army, according to a logic of power. In reality, we can discuss the role of Europe in the fault lines of geopolitical global powers and the role that it could have with respect to the United States. There are different interests. Naturally, Europe should also have a military power without always relegating to the American empire a hegemonic role in the resolution of conflicts. On the other hand, the fact of having a large military force allows the USA in this historical phase not to be concerned in any significant way with its great steps backward in terms of public debt.

We are faced with a complicated knot of problems; due to this I would begin precisely with the question of the relation between the Left and the war . . .

NEGRI: In reality, I'm not a pacifist, I've never been a pacifist. Pacifism seems to me to be a noble but vacuous sentiment. Peace has to be conquered. To assume it as a condition is dangerous. Peace can be an instrument of domination and exploitation; there are moments in which war and resistance are necessary in order to be free and to live with dignity.

I have never accepted the pacifist polemics because they seem to me to be outside reality. On the other hand, if I can admit the use of violence, I do this on the basis of the centrality of the declaration of the right of the individual and of the multitude to resist, a claim that certainly cannot be used in a context of war or within a strategic interest more or less capitalist.

The things that have happened to the Left in Italy after 1989 are among the most serious that have ever happened in its history. Why? Because it placed itself in the service of an international operation of the dissolution of a geopolitical area, constructed inside a wise project. Yugoslavia was the great dream of the Balkan bourgeoisie; certainly, it was not communism that thought of it.

They massacred centuries of history and invested money and arms in order to develop the most bestial ideologies and sentiments, petty nationalism, plain terrorism—a mad operation to enlarge the interests of three or four potentates: Germans, Austrians, the Vatican, and also Italians.

It was terrible because [Slobodan] Milosevic wasn't worse than [Franjo] Tudjman and the Kosovans weren't better than the Serbs . . . Things got to the point of a cannibalistic struggle between factions. I remember the terrible events of the rape. There were American comrades who went to Yugoslavia and denounced what the Serbs were doing, and I always responded that unfortunately all of them were raping—Serbs, Croats, Kosovans, Muslims.

I remember [Emir] Kusturica, the great director, an old friend of mine. We had organized a discussion on the history of Yugoslavia. Also there was Professor [Mirko Drazen] Grmek, very much linked to the right-wing Croat regime. Well, sometimes

Kusturica and Grmek came to blows . . . And then there was [Slavoj] Zizek, the Slovenian, who has now become more or less a Trotskyist, who didn't know what to say. Kusturica was accused of being philo-Milosevic, even if all of his work has always been libertarian, right from his splendid beginnings. Returning to the Left, the only position with dignity, even if not justifiable, was the position maintained by [Joschka] Fischer. Faced with the pacifism of the German Greens, he maintained that beyond the question of rape and the national communism of Milosevic there was the great European hypothesis: if we had united together the power of Europe, even if in a bellic-pacifying figure, we could have with a high probability relaunched the European project. A hypothesis developed and pursued by the German foreign ministry until the defeat of the referendum on the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands. What illusions he had!

SCELSI: Then the Americans arrived to resolve the question with force . . .

NEGRI: NATO's intervention was decisive; then there were the bombardments of the bridges on the Danube, and then later, on the Chinese embassy. I note this in order to finish the list of the monstrosities that were then undertaken. But in order to go forward on another terrain, I add: I am in agreement with the Nobel prizes recently awarded to two economists ([Robert] Aumann and [Thomas] Schelling) who applied game theory to war. Peace can be constructed only remembering that pacifism doesn't work, that is the thesis. If we want peace, let's look realistically at what war is. Peace is an end, not a condition; it is a result, not a presupposition.

Let's return to the theme of war. I would assume, to begin

again, that war is either about resistance and is revolutionary or it is an operation against resistance and the multitudes. Analogous to capitalism, war is always a relation. It can't be qualified otherwise—only by referring it to the class struggle can you comprehend it. Certainly, there are also bosses who want to take from their neighbor, but both of these bosses are exploiters of their peoples. It is absurd to claim, as D'Alema does, for example, that the people are in agreement with one or another of these bosses more than they are the enemy of both.

War is always dominated by the stupid presumption of managing a unilateral relation. Accompanied by a strong threat, you either obey or resist—this is the bellic relation. But war doesn't begin when the other attempts to impose command; it begins when you start to resist. It isn't the banality of *homo homini lupus** and then the fable of the transcendence of the State . . . No, really, war is never innocent . . .

SCELSI: You always recall [Thomas] Hobbes in your texts . . .

NEGRI: In a negative sense, just like I recall Spinoza who says that men come together for the goal of not making war; it is their egoism that motivates the construction of the conditions that allow them to come together. This is also Marx's conception. Communism is this, to go beyond the need to make war, to win against those who have invented war in order to divide men and exploit them. To win, by means of resistance, against those who want to exploit. In a society like this one, that no longer bases the production of wealth on the exploitation of labor time (and there-

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* Literally "Man is a wolf to man." The saying was made famous by Thomas Hobbes in the opening lines of his treatise, *De Cive*, where he suggests man's cruelty to man as justification for the existence of the state.

fore on a limited time), but on surplus and cooperation, all of this becomes even more possible.

SCELSI: On the one hand there is pacifism as ethical instance, but the Left . . .

NEGRI: Hasn't ever been pacifist! Either it was revolutionary or it used pacifism instrumentally in order to undertake a war of resistance and liberation. The Left hasn't ever been pacifist. Pure pacifists have been only single or minor figures—here in Italy, [Aldo] Capitini and [Danilo] Dolci, the Italian Gandhians. In reality, pacifism has always had a function of political struggle. The committees for peace of the fifties went against the politics of American containment of Soviet space. They were elements of an offensive from a political point of view, even if they agitated around the instance of peace. But this isn't the problem of the Left. The problem is to understand what type of political-militant activity, also violent if necessary, needs to be practiced.

I am not in agreement with these gentlemen (like D'Alema) who make war against the weak because they want to get something for themselves—little Cavours* of cynical opportunism. These are aligned with the banal and tragic conception of war as a continuation of politics by other means.

SCELSI: The tripartite division of Iraq that the American leadership is aiming at is clear. As chance would have it, at the end of October 2005 the map drawn by Lawrence of Arabia on his idea of the territorial subdivision of the area flew out the window of a

* Cavour, as prime minister, is credited with taking steps towards the unification of Italy, opportunistically, through his use of military force at the time of the Crimean War.

library. It is a repartition that seems to anticipate some of the things pursued today by the American administration.

NEGRI: What becomes crucial with the question of oil and Kurdistan? The Turks will never allow it. In reality, the American strategy is directed to the isolation of Iran and to the blocking of any subversive element in the whole area—Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine—the area they need to pacify. A thing that they aren't able to do . . . And, in fact, there is the great problem of Israel, sacrosanct in its existence but characterized by a nationalist presence so fierce and expansive that it continually generates problems . . . Will it end up like at the time of the Romans? Will its best ally, in order to maintain peace, be forced to destroy the Temple for the third time?

SCELSI: Regarding pacifism as an ethical instance, often invoked on the Left, we have to say that the model of Gandhi isn't practical, also in light of the fact that his strategy cost millions of deaths.

NEGRI: It was violent in all senses, with Luddite movements intent upon the destruction of the machines and in general of mercantile and capitalist production. In India what counted in the anticolonial struggles wasn't pacifism or antipacifism, but efficacy or inefficacy of resistance, however defined, to colonial and capitalist exploitation. Sabotage and expropriation of colonial goods were central methods of Indian "pacifism." In India there were methods of anticolonial struggle that could have been described by *Quaderni Rossi*, methods analogous to those used by certain currents of Italian workerism, "wild cats" of multitudes. The Indian scholars of this period have amply documented this. This is really an amusing element because it reveals a very strange coincidence of theoretical, ideological, and practical positions, completely inde-

pendent, at a global level. In fact, there developed inside communist resistance and outside of Soviet control, in Europe and in Asia, currents of Marxist thought that at the end encountered each other. The postcolonial school was born from those Indian historians, exponents of subaltern studies like [Ranajit] Guha, [Gayatri Chakravorty] Spivak, or [Dipesh] Chakrabarty, who began to write the unwritten history of the Indian working class and peasant class, of anti-imperial resistance to the English . . . Many of these Indians, who are now in universities around the world, come from this school. Now, their thinking meets that of *Quaderni Rossi* but also that of Socialisme ou Barbarie or of the Americans of Facing Reality, along with many other workerist currents of the base—all nonpacifist schools . . . To conclude, Gandhian pacifism didn't have anything to do with nonviolence, or better, it was a very special nonviolence that didn't have anything to do with pacifism.

SCELSI: The impression I get from your reading of the constellation of pacifism-war is that of a theoretical impasse. When you take power you have to accept obligatorily some form of compromise and, at the same time, you recognize in the facts a sort of autonomy of the political. Certainly, we can have the noble face of the Left, in this case represented by a figure like Fischer, but regarding war, one thinks always with a politically realistic approach . . .

NEGRI: No, there isn't an impasse. The autonomy of the political is relative; it is a limited concept, and it is always subordinate to specific ends that are not formal, of realization or of expression of power, but are rather those of political, economic, military domination, etc. Now, I understand war in terms of emancipation from an autonomy of the political subordinated to capitalist eco-

nomic interests. And I understand the possibility of war as resistance, as the fundamental right of resistance of the individual and the multitude, as a fact of democracy. In this sense, [George W.] Bush is a great champion of the autonomy of the political: he has reproduced it as a trivial reading of the relations of force that evade every consideration of the antagonisms and tendencies of the proletarian innovation of life. In this sense, Machiavelli was never a proponent of the autonomy of the political.

At any rate, the problem of war and the problem of democracy are extremely closely linked. You can't make war in democracy without consent. Machiavelli believes that this consent is sacrificial, that all in the community can imagine what it means to live or die for the *patria*. If you make war in democracy, it is in order to consolidate democracy itself, to extend or, better, subdivide wealth, to glorify the youth of the republic. Now, we know that some of these conceptions are utopian and as such are now taken up by reactionary cultures. Still, this is enough to establish that the problem isn't the moral one of making or not making war. Rather, it is about how and why you do it. It isn't a project of domination over other peoples that can allow democracy to make war, nor is it preventative defense. The concepts of resistance and democracy (and that of war as a consequence) are always together; they are legitimated in the act.

I can't forgive [Fausto] Bertinotti for the falsification of the concept of nonviolence, above all because by interpreting it within that falsification of war he reduces the concept of it, purely and simply, to the terrain of violence. We are dealing here with a reduction that doesn't make any sense: you resist violence. There are forms of necessary violence and, with some legitimate effort, for example, the violence of the strike. The right of resistance is

fundamental, as is also that of disobedience: they are radical rights. It is the claim that is also at the origins of true pacifism. This conception of claim in juridical terms always becomes less individualist and always more common on the basis of the intertwining of claims, between right of resistance and disobedience. And it is an element productive of new institutions and new rights.

I set out from the refusal of labor, from resistance to work because I maintain that the capitalist organization of labor is true and proper slavery. Now, however, we liberate ourselves from the slavery of labor in productive terms. We have always done this, sending our children to school, as, for example, my father or grandfather did, increasing mental capacities, producing more and working less, until we break the cage of the time of labor and recognize that work is a misery in which we are trapped. This resistance produces true peace.

But we are now in such a sad situation that in order to explain these things we almost need a metaphysics. Why doesn't the Left have a sense of this truth, if even from a distance?

SCELSI: There remains, however, the problem of defining a different paradigm. Between a pacifism that doesn't pay (including even the intelligent version with which the Swedish army was thought out, that of resistance from the base or of passive resistance) and the logic of many lebensraums, where is the different paradigm?

NEGRI: The different paradigm consists in eliminating borders. You need to eliminate borders. Let's think on a geopolitical level. Let us suppose that American unilateralism was blocked and with it the attempt of a coup d'état on Empire, on the unified economic

world, on the structures of communication and interdependence (if not total, then very high interdepedence) of societies, on national sovereignties in decay. The Americans have attempted to place a monarchical seal on this situation. In order to do it they have conducted a stupid war, now lost, in Iraq. The resistance forces, however, haven't been able to express a strong alternative movement. This is the dramatic situation in which we find ourselves today.

There are, therefore, the Americans, who are extremely uneasy due to the defeat of their attempt at a coup d'état, and at the same time, the three or four enormous continental realities (Latin America, China, India, Europe, maybe Russia within a more or less variegated relation with Europe) that respond with the declaration "We govern this world together." It is a sort of aristocracy that, reproducing the capitalist system, wants to determine a political division of the global space.

I don't think it is very easy to imagine war between these powers; on this level, the very concept of war appears outdated. Today, war is even reduced to a police action, keeping an uneasy world in order. I don't want to say that war is finished—there can always be a lunatic, a Doctor Strangelove, who triggers it . . . But the war in Iraq, for example, is in reality a police action; it is now an attempt to re-create order in a territory in which there is no longer a clear enemy but only bands of rebels, of bandits, of "public enemies." We are at the limit: not even the USA can afford war anymore, even if only a simple police operation. In fact, the Americans are forced to ask for support in order to maintain their commercial and domestic debt. They can't spend enough to make war and are obliged to ask NATO or the UN to intervene in Iraq and Afghanistan to support them.

In this situation, when we speak of war it shouldn't be correlated to peace but rather to resistance against domination, exploitation, tyranny: these are the fundamental terms that constitute the theme of peace. When you say that war isn't the continuation of politics by other means, according to the definition of [Carl von] Clausewitz, but that it is the very foundation of politics, you affirm that politics has been transformed into a violent police operation, you say that war has become an activity internal to the political, so much so as to found it and organize it. That has happened because politics has become biopower—control of the totality of human activities and the fierce expropriation of them (to return to the theme of the "common" and the enclosures), ex-closures. Therefore, from the point of view of analysis, we need to take the problem of peace back to the theme of the police, of control and exploitation, while, from the political point of view, we need to posit peace as a conquest of justice.

SCELSI: So, does war as traditionally understood now have only the function of conflict regulation on a regional basis?

NEGRI: After September 11, the USA—on a neocon bender—had three objectives: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. They haven't managed to achieve any of them. In the first place, because war has become a police operation of biopower. Second: the operation of biopower, expressed in geopolitical terms but not with the ideological violence of the Nazi ideology of lebensraum, today has an ordering function (to use the words of Carl Schmitt), while in the past it was confused with the idea of racial biopower—turgid, bloody, thick with myths of fertility, of the culture of blood and soil. The political positions of today are much more functional.

SCELSI: Let's return to the Left with regard to the war. D'Alema,

with the intervention of the Italian army in Serbia, seems to have acted—though within a logic that we don't understand and with which we don't agree, namely, that of the dissolution of Yugoslavia—following a dynamic of political character. In short, what is your criticism?

NEGRI: D'Alema made a war that was unjust and infamous: this is a given. The problem is that he also did something different from that for which he was chosen. He was voted by a people, Italians, who, beyond not wanting war in general, didn't want the destruction of ex-Yugoslavia and didn't want to be betrayed. Maybe, for other reasons, he also fulfilled the function of socialist president of the Parliament, but he betrayed his men, those who he calls the "People of the Left," and this isn't good. I have never said that D'Alema shouldn't make war in general, but rather that, in this case, he betrayed the Italians, and to betray, in a democracy, is awful. José María Aznar learned what it means to act in this way and it cost him.

In contemporary politics we need to avoid the short circuit between event and truth; today the only revolutionary moment that we can have consists precisely in discovering this conjuncture. What happened in Spain on March 11 was a catastrophic event, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that catastrophic event's conflict with negated truth. This new form of knowledge and of proletarian labor triggered an almost insurrectional process: it is what we have called the "Commune of Madrid." In three days, they threw out a government that thought it could stay in power for thirty years. I don't think that [José Luis Rodríguez] Zapatero had clear ideas. I think, rather, that he needed to improvise each day—such was his surprise . . .

SCELSI: To conclude with Bertinotti and take it up in a more extensive manner: you were saying that war is one thing and violence is another, pacifism one thing and nonviolence another . . . We are dealing with terms that can't be put on the same level with each other and, above all, that can't be reduced *ad unum*,* assuming a particular sense according to the contexts in which they are used. Now, why does a communist leader like Bertinotti talk about nonviolence in a way that seriously disturbs not only his party, but also breaks with an historical tradition of realism, which is that of the socialist movement?

NEGRI: Whether you are a realist or a utopian, resistance is always necessary. If you need to think in paradoxes: I can reject the violence of the kamikaze to the extent to which I create and adhere to the violence of the horde, a horde that attacks in formation, with intelligence, and this is the manner in which movements act at the moment in which they express their force. I can't pretend to have a hypocritical and pharisaical nonviolence.

For the good Bertinotti, rejection of violence has aspects of opportunism, a behavior that isn't very dignified. Bertinotti had chosen with loud fanfare to be the party of the movement; the movements, as we know, are aggressive, and Bertinotti couldn't present himself to the alliance with [Romano] Prodi by representing these "villains." His is a purely opportunistic choice, an attempt to contain those movements over which he would have liked to have established control.

SCELSI: Anywhere we see it, on the Left there is always in action a conscious and continuous use of an instrumentalist type of the dif-

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* "To one."

ferent mobilizations: as you said before, the committees for peace of the 1950s or the birth of the elusive organisms of the base . . .

NEGRI: I am convinced that the committees for peace that come into being today in reality aren't only against the war, but are committees or assemblies for the common, for a peace that isn't only nonwar, but also nonpolice, in favor of the freedom of migrants to cross borders, etc. There is an ideological dust that hasn't settled yet into a political program but that reveals a new social question. In my opinion, the political cycle of Seattle that went to Genoa and touched the antiwar movement is finished, but it germinated a new social cycle, that of the precariat of labor. Inside this there is expressed and exalted this ideal of the common. It is classic: the political cycle finishes and the social cycle begins again. The political cycles always express specific relations between the technical composition of labor and its political composition . . . Today I think that this new cycle of precarious labor, immaterial and cognitive, is becoming fundamental, not only here but everywhere, within the unification of the global market, including China . . . It is the new form of labor, it is the new terrain of the revolt of labor power. Here is where communist desire will go to work.

4. SEATTLE: THE ARRIVAL OF THE MULTITUDE

SCELSI: Seattle amazed not only those who hadn't participated actively in the movements of the nineties, whose traces were at any rate evident from the beginning of the preceding decade. The element of novelty of this cycle of movements can be traced back into an extensive confluence of political subjects with very different objectives. The idea of Seattle was anticipated in the text of [Jeremy] Brecher and [Tim] Costello, who developed the political application of the Lilliput theory.* The theory is based on the hypothesis that the giant can be stopped if everyone pulls their rope, even independently of the others. This hypothesis is also at the base of your idea of "multitude" . . .

It worked in Seattle. To see groups from such different backgrounds—the truck driving Teamsters together with the defenders of the turtles—and then also the fact that all this was happening in the heart of empire undoubtedly fired the imagination. Seattle is the American port that faces Asia, it is the land of Microsoft, Boeing, Coca-Cola, the home of grunge and even the first concerts of Jimi Hendrix . . . In short, in many respects a crucial place . . .

NEGRI: Seattle is also the city in which there was the first great

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* Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Reconstruction from the Bottom Up* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1994).

repression of the American workers' movement after World War I. In my opinion, it was in this historical event that successive technological developments had their origins, passing precisely first from the defeat of the professional workers and then founded on the recuperation and the transformation of the working class toward the mass worker and Fordism.

Seattle is also the city where the colonists arrived, those who instead of stopping on the East Coast and becoming workers, fled from work and arrived there in order to invent a new life for themselves . . . Seattle is also this in some ways, the organized right of flight . . .

SCELSI: If ten years ago only some specialists were conscious of the existence of the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, after Seattle the multinationals return to the center of the political debate and with them the results of the dealings of the WTO—supranational powers about which everyone is wondering. We begin to think about transnational powers able to impact daily levels of life. Seattle has clearly opened a cycle: what can we say about it?

NEGRI: Seattle was the emersion of another factor, and I insist not on "factor," but on "another." There was the spontaneous realization that another world is possible. It was a protest against the poverty of the contemporary world, which played on the surplus of value of the new labor form and on the capacity of the cognitive world to produce other associations and other ways of living. Seattle is the affirmation that capitalism is not necessary and that there exists other ways of living, political-economic alternatives to capitalism. Seattle represented this consciousness . . . "Another world is possible." This is, furthermore, an old idea from the Enlightenment, of Spinozism, of Marxism, also of a certain third

worldism closer to the indigenes than to the reproduction of Western development: this is very good!

There is everything in Seattle, like the idea of beginning a new crossing of the Lacandón Jungle in all the fields of the experience of liberation. Hurray everybody! Also the transgender groups, those for the most advanced sexual liberation. Not as happened in the sixties when you claimed to make love and not war: here there is taking place that metamorphosis of the body that promises another possible world.

"The other" is of enormous cultural importance: in order to understand what it means to give importance to the other we need to descend again to the analysis of the transformations of the way of working and of what production of surplus and production of subjectivity are. This is to say that if, according to me, the struggle against poverty remains fundamental, it should be reinvented in different terms, in the sense, that is, of the recognition of a possible surplus of value always and in every place. Without the informational computer culture, Seattle would have been impossible. All the people of Seattle see work not only as something difficult, but also as something that can liberate cooperative "nonwork" and communitarian, common self-valorization. If the Left has understood this, it has understood it in Blairian terms, leaving in place the classical ethics of labor (ethics of *emploi*, of permanent work, in Italy we say "the job" [*il posto*]), and at the same time, hypocritically, imposing the precariat—they call it mobility, but this dynamic, however, is always beneath the boss . . . While here, in Seattle, there is instead this little idea of something else that is possible, of a free precariat and free mobility: surplus.

SCELSI: It is the distinction between precarity that liberates and precarity that limits the horizons of life, a distinction that has

already been clear in Italy for ten years. Seattle didn't discover anything but brought things together. On the other hand, the mobilization wasn't really that large, at least according to the standards to which we are accustomed in Europe: only about fifty thousand people.

NEGRI: Sure, but even in Genoa during the first days the mobilization was of this size. Then, when the trade unionists arrived in Seattle protesting NAFTA, though on almost nationalist positions, the movement understood that it had succeeded in the operation of recuperating the institutional organizations rather than being themselves recuperated. It was the few comrades who invented the initiative who gave meaning to the participation of the trade unionists and not vice versa.

It's almost always like this; it was also like this for we extra-parliamentary activists in 1969 outside Fiat. I believe that things went like this in Italy until the demonstration of [Sergio] Cofferati in Rome, even if after the cycle and atmosphere changed.

Seattle was established on real substance, with becoming aware of the modification of labor, but the Left hasn't managed to interpret this change even minimally. Let's summarize: We have a Left that didn't understand the Berlin Wall. This event represents not only the fall of the Soviet Union, but also the transition to a new cycle. A Left that didn't manage to construct the question of the common, that transformed the reading of the war into a question of political realism and expression of power, when the war isn't anything other than a police instrument; a Left that acquiesces to fascist themes of security and that now doesn't understand the transformation of work either. But where are we?

Here, instead, is the problem of the other, something lived inside modernity as an alternative, an explosive potential, contin-

ually repressed until capitalism is triumphant. But in the moment in which the capitalist system enters into crisis and its productive potential is rendered critical by the emergence of internal contradictions more or less insoluble, when cognitive labor takes the place of material labor, labor is now subtracted from the time of capitalist measure and reveals the "other"—an other that is made not only of effort, but also of surplus. Thus is expressed the culture of these new working classes and the movements that follow from it. In knowledge there is enormous innovation, a new way of giving meaning to things . . . Capital, confronting these new realities, needs to change many of its instruments of control. I don't say that communism is around the corner, however, we need to be conscious that capitalism has already changed in this conjuncture in order to respond to its difficulties—two "small" things: the war and the organization of labor . . . Anyway, the only level on which I see capitalism following the transformation better is that of finance, where there is, in fact, a sort of "communism of capital." We are dealing with an amusing hypothesis: if the red cooperatives returned to the beginning and their capacity of expansion was at the height of Wall Street, their function would become that of bringing together the investors when confronted by a crisis. If this association realizes it conclusion, it could certainly be common, maybe subversive. Some intellectuals in this period have imagined a "General Intellect" with a red beret . . .

SCELSI: Let's think about the logic of the movements: the fact that in Seattle there were very different components and that a hegemonic will of some against the others didn't explode, contrary to what happened in the sixties and seventies, seems to me to be a theoretical element and something new that is important.

NEGRI: I see this as a positive thing, that is, that anyone gives circulation to the common. The intervention of hegemony and subsumption was placed in action subsequently by the parties: the American Democrats with Al Gore in the electoral campaign, here in Italy (but above all in France) with the operation of Attac.*

It is instead fundamental that the great hegemonic political line developed in terms of the multitude. Just in these days I was reading a beautiful article in *Le Monde* regarding the struggles in China against the expropriation of agricultural fields (a classic case: struggle for wages and against unearned income). These struggles are now central to political development in China: it will not be the presence of anti-globalizers or that of the NGOs that resolves the problem, but it is clear that they are beginning in a very general manner to pose the problem of respect of the labor laws and the rights of workers in struggle, just as they are posing the problem of the opposition to the occupation of common fields and of the resistance of the peasants in struggle. There are NGOs that intervene; this isn't the place to note their ambiguity. But it is important that these NGOs are close to the movement in order to avoid what happened in Iraq, where some ended up working side by side with the American army. In short, all this in order to say that the political move to the left of many NGOs is one of the results of Seattle. Around Seattle, according to what philosopher Michael Hardt says (who comes from there), there is an entire world. The computer programmers who made a lot of money and who are already in retirement at thirty-five, people who work a few days a weeks managing their capital and

* As in Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions to Aid Citizens.

do voluntary work the rest of the time, honest people, clean, who often became rich by chance—and who, sometimes, act in order to change the world.

SCELSI: Let's turn now to the subsequent political transition. Seattle marked the beginning of a phase. Then, there have followed different social fora, in Pôrto Alegre, Florence, Paris, London, Mumbai, etc., but with a very abstract logic centered on the idea of a great popular university, almost to make up, with forced stages, for a difficulty of analysis and above all of conscience, in particular among younger activists.

NEGRI: You raise a number of problems. First of all, you say that the alternative globalization movement is a movement that reads little, despite the assimilation of an enormous mass of material. This is correct. But, first, we need to decide what a political movement means, and clearly, I don't believe that it means party, while you, according to me, implicitly presuppose it even if you are not in agreement. You want to see some effects, which, however, are apparently not there. I maintain, rather, that the effects are more profound and powerful, precisely due to the fact that they are not represented immediately, and I'm convinced that to begin again from the beginning doesn't mean to go backward but to invent the new. These kids aren't less revolutionary than the Bolsheviks, but are much more intelligent; they are conscious of the fact that to modify society today means to go by way of in-depth knowledge because it is knowledge that makes freedom. It is not only about breaking the yoke of the wage, but about stirring up the intelligence. This is freedom—when you aren't forced to go to work and you like inventing, together with others.

This is the key that has been positively assimilated by people and

that is certainly not the transition to the party. The "Lilliputians" of today are genuinely wise. This is a great movement—you can't think of this movement like it was in the seventies. It will create a lot of initiatives, there will be struggles, problems, but it will not go by way of a little party in order to become autonomous, on the contrary . . . The only ones who seem to be rowing against the current are some old Marxists who still seem to live between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

I'm not a Cartesian rationalist, and I think that if we live in a biopolitical society, that is, inside a series of relations between bodies—living together; trying out intrinsic, common links, from the point of view of both domination and of freedom, of culture and production and reproduction—we consequently have to elaborate a concept of reason that is able to touch and to express passions beyond functional rationality, a concept of reason that is not Weberian or instrumental, a new corporeal enlightenment, a plural and corporeal reason. This is a philosophical transition absolutely fundamental and primary in contemporaneity. Remember the fact that the political has always ruled over the totality of metaphysics (from the time of Socrates, maybe). We therefore need to find today the foundation of a biopolitical reason. This will save us from that series of disfigurements of the revolutionary project that always threaten us, and it is research that needs to go along with our methodical construction in order to carry out the program of Seattle. Between the new epistemology of Gregory Bateson and the highest levels of informational construction, there is a physical, corporeal continuity, which these movements incorporate. Knowledge of feminism has particular importance in this respect, not only regarding the question of the body, but above all for the affirmation of the lines of difference

that it operates. In fact, it is only on these lines of differences that we construct the common. Already in the seventies, feminist movements had begun to express the realization of their difference as an ontological difference that moves, unhinges oppression, and recomposes the common. This realization was then absorbed by capitalist forces in the moment in which they wanted to restrict feminine work in the chain of exploitation, giving to it—astutely—a hegemonic role: the becoming-woman of work. The emotional qualities that are at the basis of domestic labor, of service, and of the daily life of family existence of the woman were, so to speak, thrown up on the general screen of the transformation of labor power: honor to the women, who have always put up with the exploitation of the grandfather, of the father, of the husband, of the children when she becomes flexible and mobile in the development of her productive or reproductive or universal activity. Here, universality. Even men bend to this, to the flexibility and mobility of a labor commanded in a patriarchal manner! You want the common? We offer it to you in the beautiful form of a large diffuse family, collective and universal, organic and reproductive . . . That's your business. I think nevertheless that this capitalist project hasn't passed and won't pass the test: the difference, that creative difference that is inside cognitive labor and inside the biopolitical expression of exploitation, will get the better of it.

SCELSI: I wanted to concentrate on the networking of thought, a transition that seems to me to be lacking in your nevertheless efficacious description. There was a growth of consciousness also by subjects. For the first time in the history of the movements, an instrument, namely, the Internet (sharing of practices and of knowledge, birth of a forum of collective discussion, thematic

canals such as mailing lists and IRC,* diffuse forms of chatting), triggering the birth of blogs, of newspapers written in the Internet with the modality of open publishing, has allowed us to discuss and to criticize in an absolutely nonvertical way: true and genuine antiauthoritarian practices in the daily practices of politics.

NEGRI: I agree. In reality, those things were already seen with other instruments, among them Radio Alice and Radio Sherwood, but these things were going forward for a long time with the cyclostyle . . . Then computer technology began. I think, obviously, that this transformation is irreversible. But the interesting thing isn't the irreversibility of the phenomenon but rather the fact of revealing the new nature of the political. For example, what does it mean to go through a blog? Inside there is life, but also exhibitionism, losing yourself in the things . . . Blogs are also a terrible dispersion and manifest fully the mad aspect of the informational moment, the quantity and the waste . . . Sometimes instead of being a great sea, the Internet becomes a bog, where there is the strong impression of effort . . . Implosion? I don't think so. And nevertheless there would really be the need to give to communication and to processes of construction of meaning in the Internet a corporeal urgency, which doesn't only mean producing images. At the same time, you can't undervalue the emersion in the Internet, now on a mass and general level, of forms of sociality that assume important affective tones, lucid, in which there is exchange, happiness in the discovery of new and surprising relations and, at the same time, of knowledge. The totality in a social dynamic that has increasingly the tones of com-

* Internet Relay Chat, an online chat network where participants exchange real-time text messages.

municative horizontality, in an almost plasmatic dimension that imitates social relations, sometimes in positive terms.

SCELSI: It happened in these terms, at least until 1995–96. The Internet lit up the knowledge of bodies with the excuse of practicing something pioneerlike; one wanted to know the other, that other pioneer with whom one chatted for whole nights and when they met they hugged. Just as soon as the Internet became a really popular instrument, available to all, progressively but also relatively quickly, those social relations that were constructed in the previous phase of life of the Net were weakened. And then there emerged a plethora of other instruments. However, there is still the body in the Internet. Beginning from this networking, political groups were born that intensify the processes of signification, real and true subjects of collective enunciation . . .

NEGRI: When I speak of bodies, I say that the argumentation becomes coherent with the effective exchange of information, the "I" with the "you," and that thus political initiatives become real. And this occurs without taking up again old models that concluded in the idea of party, first the movement and then the party. What there is today in place of the party, I don't know; the series of attempts to redefine the party has finished badly, and we've realized that to define the party is always a shortcut with respect to real problems. The problem is in placing at the center of the debate expression and representation, of destructuring and deconstructing the concept of representation and therefore of constructing the concept of expression . . . At this point new problems emerge. If, in fact, today there is recognition of the movements (we were saying it regarding the NGOs, despite attempts of co-optation by the American government), the theme

of the relation of the movements emerges with the institutional structures of power. Today the movements are more often taken up into the processes of government or in administrative processes according to the methods of so-called governance. Interesting experiences are posed in which the movements now have more importance than the parties. Anyway, we'll come back to this later in our discussion.

Let's return now, rather, to Seattle and its reflexes. Now, the Left hasn't understood that to be "left" is to be a party of movements. In the beginning, the L' Unione maybe had this idea, but now it is all gone: the Left has ended up embracing [Mario Clemente] Mastella and [Antonio] Di Pietro. A party doesn't live anymore from its representation but from its capacity to be a movement. There can be ambiguity in this relation, but there is truth. On the other hand, aren't the processes of governance always rather ambiguous? The certainty of right, this myth of the triumphant bourgeoisie—doesn't it become an ever-more-pallid figure and experience? But in the end it isn't that bad. In reality, the relation of the parties with the movements will allow us to go through the new relations of power that constitute the social.
You need to remember that when reality changes, the decisions of governance become, if not illegal, then difficult to insert in the frame of the state of law, because these decisions are taken up while lacking a normative frame effectively defined and operative, and with uncertain references to reality, that is, to the measure and to the costs of labor, or to the lack of proportion of cooperation and of social communication, etc. In short, the fact that the epoch of the measure of labor has finished has really enormous consequences—it is a change of civilization. Seattle has signaled the social awareness of this: it was a bell that tolled loudly.

5. CHIAPAS AND POLITICAL WORK IN THE NET

SCELSI: Zapatism from the beginning had an extraordinary echo in the whole world, also due to the fact that it entered the field on the same day that NAFTA came into force. Subsequently, it has emerged that the Zapatistas had been secretly organizing for at least ten years before appearing on the public scene on that 1 January 1994. Why is the Zapatista experience so important for the global Left? Why do we have to draw upon this experience, independently from the evolution of the Zapatista experience itself in the last ten years?

NEGRI: My memory of the Zapatista insurgency and Subcomandante Marcos is basically fairly old. At *Futur Antérieur* (the journal I edited during my exile in Paris), we produced two large issues in the first half of the nineties on the Zapatista experience and on its reception in the American movements. The Zapatista movement appeared to us like something profoundly new, first of all regarding Mexico and the continental area, but also as a moment of confrontation between the new and the old, modernity and postmodernity, between the United States and Mexico.

There was the possibility of imagining something that was other than the future of capital. In short, Zapatism was the first recuperation of the future for the imagination of another modernity. By "another modernity," I mean something other than that which was and is modernity, something other than the reduction

to a continuous historical model, progressive and linear. Even if Zapatism has its foundation in the traditional civilization of the Mexican and indigenous populations, it is another way of imagining the future.

Often people have discussed this business in a very rigid way. For example, I remember a clash with a series of "indigenist" anthropologists who posed the problem of the reconquest, the reconstruction of the indigenous world as a radical alternative to modernity.

But the problem is another one, as Marcos emphasized, that is, the capacity to imagine a development and a dynamic that would not be regressive, as would have happened if they had followed the indigenists, but rather progressive, though not dominated by the capitalist model.

On the other hand, the fact that modernity is something profound contradictorily didn't emerge only from the experiences of these peoples of the third world dominated in a colonial way, but also from the analysis of European capitalist modernity, where there appeared currents of politics and thought alternative to capitalist hegemony. I myself sought to reconstruct the development of modernity, though in terms of an alternative to the radical democratic currents, from Machiavelli to Spinoza to Marx, and against the ideological lines that had sustained capitalist power, from Descartes to Hobbes to Hegel.

These lines of rupture of modernity and of allusion to other horizons, which would not be those of the linearity of capitalist development, had also emerged inside socialist development, in thought and in struggles. In the analysis of development and in the determinism of progress, the profound marriage between reformist socialism and bolshevism, between capitalist develop-

ment and the liberation of man inside the constitution of a more progressive, stronger, more efficacious modernity was presented as an extremely contradictory given, if you think of those currents of the "other" workers' movement, humanist and libertarian, if you think of productive utopias that were posited in order to break with any idea of linearity and the necessity of development as such.

In the Third World, the push toward the effective rupture of the linearity of capitalist development and of the Euro-American model emerged in a stronger manner. Today, postcolonial studies also help us to comprehend this rupture, which have shown the extent to which capitalism, by means of the forms of imperialism and colonialism, has castrated the capacity of the "third" populations to express the wealth of their own experiences. These same studies have also underlined how false the image that colonialism constructed of the colonized countries is and how functional it is to domination and, on the contrary, how inside the imperial structures, for example, those in India, there never ceases to be another project of life and development and consequently there developed a strong context of struggles.

Thus, Zapatism is the demand for another possible modernity. It is the anticipation of that which then became the alternative globalization of Seattle but moved to a stronger colonial and biopolitical scene that is connected to the effects of the Spanish conquest of Latin America.

Another fundamental element of Zapatism is that it takes to bits and criticizes fundamentally all the theories of the traditional Left in Latin America. It negates their radicality, in the sense of root, and thus their capacity to be inserted in the indigenous context. In reality, the Zapatistas say to us that the Third Worldist

discourse, established on the colonial reality, reproduces exactly the discourse of the European Left, which wants to realize its own dream of industrial sovereignty in the Third World. But all of this doesn't have anything to do with the desires, the passions, the tendencies, the imagination of the peoples of the Third World.

Zapatism instead wants an effective synthesis of the capacity to reconstruct or, better, to reinvent community, an element that already existed in the precolonial regimes and had a role in the resistance against the Spanish invasion: it is the attempt to reconquer this force of construction for a development of liberation.

Zapatism isn't an antidevelopmentalist ideology, it isn't an ecological ideology; it maintains the primacy of production but takes it back to the community as process. Development needs to happen crossing the Lacandón Jungle.

Development happens asking all those who are inside the community what the lines of a possible hegemony are. Now, hegemony is constructed in each moment; it isn't given, there don't exist preconstituted lines that you can take up. This is the strongest declaration of war and, at the same time, of reconstruction made by Zapatism. Furthermore, Zapatism isn't posited as a traditional revolutionary movement (the storming of the Winter Palace, etc.), but as a movement that combats and constructs, refusing at the same time the homology of power and counterpower passed down to us by the socialist tradition, and thus the ideology itself of taking power. It is thus not only a case of opposing power to counterpower, but of constructing another communitarian power, different from the great system of production based on the one. The community isn't one, but a dynamic totality of singularities, experiences, and processes. In the studies of Pierre Clastres on South American indigenous systems

there was already a profound intuition of all this. To be liberated from the modern capitalist system consists in producing another modernity.

Can this experience be transferred to other contexts? Zapatism lined up against NAFTA not because it is opposed to the extension of markets (the North American market is certainly not the largest), but because it opposes the necessity, imposed by NAFTA, of forced homogenization, of capitalist homogenization in the strict sense.

I don't know how this experience will finish, but it has meant a lot in our reflections.

Is it maybe possible to relate all of this to the experiences of contestation of capitalist science and ecology lived by us on the terrain of knowledge, or of experiences like democratic medicine, radical psychiatry, the first antinuclear struggles, the reaction to the tragedy of Seveso? I believe in part yes, in part no. It seems to me, in fact, that the Zapatista experience is more complex, both insofar as it is critical and in terms of popular militancy and historical dynamic. In reality, those experiences that we cited before were of enormous importance for us, pedagogically and propaedeutically, but they have never had the density of the Zapatista's movement in its real efficacy and its capacity of expansion. There were critical experiences. I remember, for example, the alternative globalization inside socialism, inside theoretical, philosophical critiques of modernity: extremely important experiences, which, however, are transfigured in the moment in which they became real militancy and above all experiences of armed struggle. The exodus of the Zapatistas from the scientific, cultural, and political unilateralism of the capitalist West is fundamental: an armed exodus without ever being militaristic or maniacally war-

like, but which nevertheless remains an armed and insurrectional experience.

SCELSI: The Zapatista experience refers back to the indigenous experience, whose echo is present in the novels of Manuel Scorza or [José María] Arguedas, the story of Garabombo the invisible, the indigenous community in Peru that seeks to obtain justice by means of infinite legal recourses and that in the end don't get anything. Therefore, these works are desperate attempts by means of the narrative form of magical realism to represent one's own rights and the appearance of a hero capable of incarnating the interests of the community.

On another level, in the 1930s there had also appeared a response to a frenetic modernity that, without flattening out the Nazi "*Blut und Boden*," was communitarian but had its theoretical roots in the thought of the Right. How can we differentiate these experiences on the communitarian hill?

NEGRI: The objection is reasonable. Zapatista thought doesn't have anything to do with communitarian thought of the 1930s for obvious reasons. Modernity was interrupted by the process of the Zapatista insurgency, while in the conception of the *Gemeinschaft** there is an attempt to reintroduce the originary and cultural unity in the development of historical individuals. This does not exist in Zapatism and in revolutionary communitarianism. Here we are not dealing with the problem of reconstructing the individual completely destroyed by the alienation of capitalist development. Rather, it is a collective individual, a common individual who

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* *Gemeinschaft* (community) is a term introduced into modern sociology by Tönnies—he opposes it to *Gesellschaft* (society), which is regarded as the more complex, "modern" form of social organization.

wants to take up again the key of its own progress and development. This is a sustainable difference that the reactionary discourse on the community has never been able to develop.

The same Nazi concept of nation and race is based on the reactionary romanticism of the possessive, egoistic individual. Space, blood and body, corporeality and territory: that anthropology is aggressive and claims to expand into the space of others, and considers the other a terrain of conquest. That individual always has egoistical peculiarities that are completely lacking in the Zapatista case. Zapatista man is the opposite.

However complex it is to maintain, from a theoretical point of view we are, on the contrary, faced with an individual more amorous than egoistical. Now, beyond easy ironies, it is a given fact that modernity and the capitalist culture have managed to remove from our language two fundamental words, "poverty" and "love."

The debate on poverty happened in the West in the thirteenth century, but from that moment the concept of poverty was cancelled. In particular, in the history of the Church, it was cancelled by John XXII, the pope who made it heretical even to speak about poverty. Maybe it isn't by chance that a "lunatic" like John XXIII took that name and reintroduced, via the Vatican Council, the theoretical category of poverty to the ecclesiastical debate. He was a man who had profound historical and theological knowledge and who wanted to take up the history of the Church, renovating its teaching from the moment in which the concept of poverty was cancelled.

Regarding the concept of love, it is eliminated or substituted by two fundamental experiences: the mystical experience, in which love is not directed to another human but to God, and

romantic love, which leads to eroticism. Neither the one nor the other of these two experiences is to be undervalued, but I work instead around the hypothesis that love is an ontological power. As in Spinoza, it is intellectual love that constructs the world, and thus community is constructed in the world. Now, behind the emergence of alternative globalization there are precisely concepts of poverty and love as ontological realities, just as there are behind Zapatism and other attempts of revolt more or less indigenous—the Black Panthers, the Peruvian mythologies . . .

These observations, I think, can respond to your objection to the concept of community taken up from the reactionary Right.

The ideology of the partisan or the theory of the partisan war (between [Ernst] Jünger and Schmitt) is the tranquil defense, solid and ferocious, typically reactionary, of a stable and egoistical centripetal community. Alternative globalization (also in the form of war) has something in excess—it is centrifugal and not centripetal. They are two completely different concepts: one is centered on greediness and hypocrisy, the other on poverty understood as surplus expression of the *Vogelfrei.** The poor person is free like a bird.

In certain respects, my outline is very traditional and encyclopedic . . . Insofar as man is poor, he demands love, he can't be born without love, without love he cannot grow and develop himself, and only insofar as he is a bearer of poverty does he love and is loved—and it is in this perspective that he manages to construct real community. All the miserable corruptions and depravations of the concepts of love and poverty branch off from this formidable experience.

The destruction of the Franciscan order by the papacy occurred

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* *Vogelfrei* is used by Negri and Hardt in *Empire*, following Marx, to describe the position of the proletariat/multitude. To be *Vogelfrei* is to be an outlaw.

precisely beginning with a clash over the concept of poverty: perfect poverty and perfect joy, the Christ. The Church negated, in fact, that the lack of property and of possession constitutes the condition of man before original sin. Poverty remains a virtue, but only at an individual level. Consequently, they went on to define, by means of subterfuges, new mystifications, following which the brothers are poor singularly while collectively, as friaries, they can possess riches . . .

Zapatism is a great reconquest that returns to the origins of our civilization.

SCELSI: I would like you to talk some more about the question of the community. Perhaps in Chiapas they succeeded precisely because there they could count on a stable community, territorially and in terms of subjects, with a base of trust and permanent relations, on which it is possible to construct a political reasoning, above all in relation to an external attack. All that seems more difficult in our countries in the first world, in which there is modernity already for some time and in which we don't have communities as points of reference anymore, unlike Zapatism. Therefore, how can we do . . .

NEGRI: Despite everything, I don't believe that things are so difficult. The question normally posed is: what is the point on which possessive individualism can be overcome? Doesn't it constitute a new given nature of Western man? Despite everything, I think that our organized life in common is infinitely more important than our organized life in private terms. In reality, monetary and consumerist privatization of life is something very exhausting. However, despite this exhaustion, we are polite and affectionate with our neighbor. Anyone of us could burn the cars of our neigh-

bors or pollute their water, however, the very complexity of our life leads us to act in solidarity; otherwise we wouldn't be able to live. Every time that I travel in an airplane, I think of the thousands of people who are at the foundation of my traveling.

Once again, it is a Spinozist paradox: the more complicated our life becomes, the more affectionate we have to be. It isn't true that the growing complexity of living leads us to egoism, while it is true that egoism compels us to love. The necessity of surviving individually also leads us to love or to tolerate or, at any rate, to utilize others. Equally, it is true that power, in order to hierarchize its own intervention of domination on homogenous and communitarian societies and therefore potentially enemies of capitalist development, is compelled to divide, to begin again, to break these communitarian desires, not to accept them or to mystify them by means of fierce theories and practices. Bourgeois culture leaves only to art the capacity to recompose our existence in an expressivist manner.

I therefore don't believe in the sociological theory of increasingly higher individualization inside complexity. Rather, it is exactly the opposite: inside complexity what wins are the elements of community; it isn't the chaotic elements that push us toward implosion, but the communitarian elements that push us toward cohesion.

All this isn't linear, but contradictory and dialectical. The problem is to understand what are the winning powers and where they are. The men in the Lacandón Jungle push us to think and to struggle on this.

SCELSI: The communitarian experience in the United States was managed first by means of the ideology-myth of the melting pot, then by means of the utilization of quotas, so-called "affirmative

action," in which an idea of community very different from that which you have just sketched out emerges. There are communities of second, third, fourth generations that still maintain specific traits of their origins, even though they are now completely American citizens, as transpires from their very names: African-Americans, Asian-Americans, etc. It is another level with respect to the first, but it is still one of the questions . . .

NEGRI: I absolutely don't believe that the discourse on the forms of assimilation or of national identity can be absolutized. These forms of assimilation were based on extremely precise socio-economic dynamics, that is, historically determined assimilation through work and therefore welfare.

In general terms, melting pot doesn't mean anything. It's a case of assimilative practices, a classic case of positive sociology, like the analysis of the absorption of the Jews in Germany or the United States, the great studies of Weber on the Polish agricultural workers, which ultimately aren't anything but studies on the Poles of Chicago . . . Studies that don't do anything if you take them outside the real consistency of economic absorption and the dynamics of territorialized wages. Ways of life change and are constituted on the basis of norms of consumption that the quantity, quality, and redistribution of wages allow. It is clear, furthermore, that at a certain point of maturation in these societies, the ways of life become more important than the wage indices and they themselves determine the dynamics of development of these societies.

The discourses of today that insist on the fact that the criteria of traditional assimilation have been cancelled seem to me like *Kyrie eleison*. They say that the American model has been cancelled, looking at Hurricane Katrina, as if Los Angeles in 1992 or

1976 in New York didn't happen. Or they say that the English integrationalist criterion is finished, saying that there are kids full of beer who set the bombs of July 7, as if they were simple hooligans, and now they pick on the kids in France . . .

All of these young people without work, without life prospects, in the worst misery. This is the fundamental thing: you give them money and maybe they won't be hooligans anymore.

We have left a Fordist society without any model to organize the post-Fordist societies. The bosses know well how to use these people that work in solitude and from which they make money, but they don't know how to order them, how to command them.

SCELSI: I want to go back to our reception of Zapatism, a theme that we have actually only touched upon. The communications of Marcos and the use of the Internet were fundamental for them but also for us. This intelligent use of the Net has immediately shown their modernity, more than the comprehension of their theoretical structure would have, an aspect that would have been metabolized by us only afterward. It was an element of anticipation: they have taught us to use the Net, they have pushed us to do it.

NEGRI: Undoubtedly, in those years the Internet wasn't as widespread. Being malicious, here one could ask to what extent the managers of the Net and the businesses that produce PCs haven't used the Zapatistas in order to reach a certain type of public—it's something I've always thought. There is at any rate a leap in quality—we aren't anymore at the faxes used by the student movements, like in the case of the Pantera* in 1990—which came with Internet and from the Forest. The Mexican government didn't have the same

* The student movement in 1990 in all the universities in Italy against the privatization knowledge.

means as those of the United States in order to govern the Internet, as is testified to in certain respects by the electronic blackout put in place by the Americans in Iraq. Zapatism managed to go through the small gaps and to put the movement in the Net.

SCELSI: What you are saying is true only in part. In reality, there existed already at the end of the eighties practices of the movement in the Net that imagined an alternative informational culture of the base. Not only in the USA by means of the circuit of the BBS (Bulletin Board Systems) and the foundation of FidoNet (a network that at the beginning had a strong libertarian element), but also in Germany with the birth of the Chaos Computer Club and in Holland with the group Hacktic. Not to speak of Italy, where there were two distinct realities in play for a while, the group of Decoder and Cybernet on the one hand, and ECN on the other. Remember that all these realities were already born in the eighties, even in some cases, like FidoNet in America, in the early eighties. Maybe it's better to say that the Zapatistas putting their communications on the Net coincided with the first mass explosion of the phenomenon of the Internet . . .

What do you mean when you say "put the movement in the Net"?

NEGRI: Many things. It means that the movement is no longer identitarian and/or charismatic, but linguistic, rhizomatic. It means that there aren't simply singularities that react and that consensus becomes sharing. It means that the objectives and times are constructed collectively. Nevertheless I have the doubt that when I say "collective" I am already saying something false: the objectives are constructed by means of dialogue, by means of participation, and this means that the subjects of the movement

become multitudinous. That is, that the movement is composed of singularities, that the same subjectivity is a complex of singularities and not an identity, that there isn't a soul anymore but network and relation, that the modes, understood in a Spinozist sense, are more important than substance: something very important when you want to consider, from the theoretical and philosophical point of view, the common. From the point of view of behavior, any of these themes is a line of research.

SCELSI: The Net is changing politics and the Left?

NEGRI: The Left still hasn't understood anything. The only reaction has been to move to the right in order to gain the maximum public (as they say). "The public [*gente*]" is a medium between people, class, and individuality: the people were formed by the State, the class by the party, while the public is constructed from a mixture of the media, television, newspapers, and by small editorial production of the worst type. Here is the public of the Left. That of the Right isn't better or worse. This "public" isn't multitude at all.

SCELSI: Thus the Net is changing the way of doing politics?

NEGRI: Yes, but there is a good form of the Net and at the same time its mystification. The Net, in fact, is also the place where you find advertising messages, ideological viruses; the more complexity grows, the more it becomes full of trash. There are negative quantities that expel the true innovations.

SCELSI: Are we dealing here maybe with a political class alien to the use of technological means? Is it an antiscientific Left?

NEGRI: That's a complex question because it's full of different

meanings. The Left, in particular the communist Left, has always had within it a knowledge of technology applied to work, not as a secondary thing that often makes the error of having utopian or too realistic illusions. We shouldn't forget that communism is the "Soviets plus electricity"; the fact that it didn't manage to become the "Soviets plus computers" has certainly posed a problem.

At any rate, when the socialist imagination loses its relation with democracy, it loses its fundamental pendant. What is capitalist development, fundamentally? Technology plus the market, and the market is a certain type of subjectivity that is set in motion by possessive individualism. What is socialism? Technological development, therefore accumulation and innovation, plus democracy, that is, the political capacity of society to direct itself. The problem is that the absorption of socialism in the political market has actually deprived socialism of any capacity to refer itself to democracy.

With respect to your question: our socialists now lack the collective reference. They aren't antiscientific (an ambiguous though real term), and it's not that they become so when they don't find their context. They are politicians who want votes and popular adhesion (by the public) without realizing that developing technologies means increasing democratic participation. They haven't managed to do it because they are taken by the political market, and thus they have lost a vision of democracy in radical terms.

We would need to talk about this at length; let's summarize it for now. There isn't democracy if not as communitarian participation, community in the network of singularity and multitude, which is impossible to homologize to power (the so-called paradox of [John] Holloway: "How to make the revolution without taking power?"). This is the democratic community that is com-

pletely outside the development of the socialist and communist parties. The latter entrust themselves to parliamentary representation and not to democratic participation. But parliamentary representation is finished, and there has already been an exodus in terms of communitarian democratic participation. Certainly, it won't be the formula of the primaries that will resolve this problem. The question is completely different; it is the question of the effective direction of the complex totality of social life in which we are inserted and that of deciding who will lead it. Here the Left doesn't know how to say anything to us that is different from the capitalist leadership of affairs that uses businesses for actions and the organization of power by means of administration. The sense is that the Left doesn't know how to act around themes of governance, or in the attempt to turn administration into something open, in order to gather the local, democratic experiences, the particular needs, the articulations of the movements. Regarding all this the Left doesn't know what to say, if not to preach about "participatory" mechanisms completely without influence or even mystifactory.

SCELSI: Therefore, thinking in particular of the Italian Left, it seems that it hasn't understood anything about technology in itself. Think of the experiences of the free radio stations, that on the contrary were well understood by the movements, but also of the experience of TV stations, which then became the commercial or informational culture of the base.

NEGRI: The radio stations were direct and democratic participation . . . Technologies inserted in a developed capitalist environment are always, at the very least, double-edged. In order to develop a TV station at a national level with sixty million poten-

tial viewers, a medium share, you need to start with a substantial investment. The furthest the Left has gone, faced with the taboos of the freedom of the market, was the position of [François] Mitterrand, who constructed great constitutional agencies for the control of communication. If you look at Italy, the groups of the cooperatives linked to the Left are maybe able to buy a large bank like the BNL (even if they didn't manage it) or to construct large dams in Kenya or in the Congo. However, they haven't ever made the decision to buy a television station worthy of the name. To acquire a television transmitter in itself doesn't mean to possess a particular sensibility for democracy: a television means the possibility of gains. Maybe we would have been able to claim that they have become an organ of democracy, but they have avoided the risk.

I'll cite an example—for me, stunning—related to this lack of understanding. In itself, I don't think it is an expression of the incapacity to understand the efficacy of technologies, so much as a mess of things that at the end became a block: [Luiz Inácio] Lula [da Silva]. He becomes president with 65 percent of the vote, he has an enormous power. However, he is conditioned by an imperfect parliamentary majority and thus acts as parties always have in the Brazilian situation, that is, using corruption and bestowing prizes on minoritarian groups, corporative or evangelical . . . He doesn't ever think, however, of the realization of an organ of the press or of the media that permits him to intervene in a mass manner on the terrain of communication. He thinks that his charismatic position, owed to electoral consensus, can save him from the counterattack that the united power of press and television (solidly in the hands of private monopolies) could develop. And here he falls. These powers, in fact, mobilize an attack that

transforms the normal problems of corruption of a system like that of Brazil into a business of irreducible juridical-political heaviness. And they manage to get away with it. Ultimately, I believe that Lula will manage to rise up, but the business is an index of this lack of understanding: a television station like Globo would have cost less than the costs sustained in order to develop parliamentary corruption.

When, in the seventies and after, we threw ourselves in and experimented with radio stations, faxes, the Net, it was because we didn't have anything to do with the Left. For the Left, the problem isn't the lack of understanding of technologies, but the lack of understanding of democracy, except that, when there is sensibility for democracy, Lula has the power not so much of technologies, but of the capitalism that is behind the technology of communication. It is a Gordian knot, this, to be cut with adequate force.

6. GENOA: EPIPHANY OF THE NEW

SCELSI: Genoa, a dramatic experience that was then eclipsed by the events of the Twin Towers, has represented a wound that is difficult to heal. We found ourselves faced with an occupation of a city that recalled Gaza. What did Genoa represent for society in general and for the movement?

NEGRI: For the movement it has represented above all recomposition after ten years of tiredness: recomposition, renovation, requalification. Genoa was the first time for the movement, a definition in itself improper, so much that we should call it the "Movement of Genoa" insofar as it is neither a student movement nor a movement of a class.

With respect to other cities, Genoa has a strange role in Italy, from the revolt of Balilla in the eighteenth century to the revolt of the sixties. It is a sort of historical clock of Italian social life. In 1960 a new subjective reality emerged, and with the famous shirts with stripes there appeared the mass worker, the port workers with the hooks, who accompanied the new immigrants of the axis of the steel industry and auto industry. Now, we've found ourselves faced by the appearance of a new proletarian Left—multitudinous, intellectual, precarious, completely new. Here we encounter the new harlequin subject.

The second important thing happened in Carlini Stadium, in that stadium where the fundamental components of the militants who had come to Genoa met in those days, well, here there were

technical experiments not of leadership, but of sharing, a practice of a regime of assemblage. Now, we know that a regime of assemblage isn't able to resolve anything; maybe sometimes it is able to maintain decisions already made in the past, like, for example, staying strong against repression. But when the defense of the G8 became an early form of preventative war, a war of low intensity sufficient to create a new scenario of violence and to show the figure of the globalized state . . . well, if there had not been that practice of assemblage, people would have fallen prey to confusion, and there wouldn't have been that miracle that was the mass resistance.

As we were saying, two interesting things emerged from Genoa: one, as we have seen, is centered on the dynamic of the construction of resistance; the second is important because it reveals a new type of social representation. There isn't anymore, as in the past, only the residue of the defeat of the extraparliamentary Left (social centers, CUB, COBAS,* extreme fractions of the workers' movement), but a new population presents itself that wants to reaffirm the capacity of expressing itself democratically against the war that is coming, against the new totalitarian media organization of the social, against the precaritization that is promoted.

We are dealing with a great transition, analogous to that of 1960, which makes a separated multitude emerge and recomposes it socially and politically. Carlini is the network—agitated, rough, organized not technologically, but with an efficacious method. I don't know if this could become a way of constructing organization; however, there isn't any other terrain of experimentation. It is only practices of this type that can introduce the solution to the problem of organization.

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* Confederazione unitaria di base; confederazione dei comitati di base.

SCELSI: What is the political result of the experience, beyond the current reproposal of the historical problem between theory and practice?

NEGRI: In Genoa we found ourselves faced with a very hard initiative of the State regarding social conflict (Gianfranco Fini was the real deus ex machina of the business). Second element: the end of any illusion that the instruments of the State can be democratic. In Genoa we experienced that the instruments of the police are linked to the imperial leadership. As for the theme of organization, the groups able to conflict have tried to express a coherent and continuous mass power, which resisted and defended the bodies of the protesters. The polemic with the black bloc was exacerbated by the Right and the Left, press and media in order to disfigure the image of Genoa. Certainly, there was also extremism on the Left, but let's go slowly before we compare it with the extremism expressed by the organs of the State.

SCELSI: But the protesters didn't go to Genoa only for a march . . .

NEGRI: Sure, but you can't accuse the groups that led the marches and who resisted for hours and hours, the so-called heads, you can't accuse them of submissiveness and permissivism, as the black bloc said on numerous occasions. I know personally some of the Tute Bianche. It doesn't seem to me that they wanted either to distract the multitude from going toward the possibility of an intifada or to organize it. This was the great accusation—in Genoa there was the possibility of an intifada, and you maintained discipline.

Today we know how it is in reality more important, from the point of view of the efficacy of the movement and of its symbolic

capacity, to manage to keep afloat a multitudinous mass, to make it impossible for the police to act, in short, to express the capacity to resist the state of siege. And this resistance to the state of siege poses problems of strategy that need to be studied. I don't believe, in fact, that any government of the Left would have held back from an attack of this type. These are now no longer problems of public security, but of governance: the movements continually destabilize the practices of power. It isn't due to this that we say that the revolution is close at hand, but these dynamics are nevertheless extremely efficacious in every sense. For example, in Rome, the demonstration of 150,000 students near Parliament has weakened [Letizia] Moratti's school reform infinitely more than the complaints expressed by academic senates and trade unions. Genoa, like Seattle, is an expression of this recomposition of the multitude (of diversity, singularity), which, if it isn't a strike, nevertheless gathers its aspects of alternative globalization. It was something new, it demonstrated the new physiology of the movements.

In your question there is maybe a certain sympathy for the black bloc. They should be analyzed and understood, certainly, but according to me they are mistaken. I am against the individualism of rebellious action just as much as possessive individualism. I maintain that the renewal of the movements is always collective in any form and in any moment of their recomposition. The figure of the industrial worker, of the proletariat, of the exploited worker doesn't exist if not in a collective form. Nobody was ever exploited alone. Solitary revolt is Nietzschean or Nechayevian: sometimes it is morally efficacious, but it always loses politically. When I think that the dialectic is finished, I draw the conclusion that any isolated representation of the negative is always mistaken. My annoyance with the black bloc isn't due to their revolt,

but to the fact that they don't revolt with the others, they revolt against the others with a claim of purity, an individualist height that isolates them. In this individual isolation of rebellion I don't see reconstruction.

Genoa and the other movements, like the Zapatistas, are, on the contrary, for a collective action, for not homologizing themselves to power. To destroy a bank, on the other hand, is fundamentally to accept homologization. Who is guiltier? The person who destroys the bank or the person who builds it? This is always a case of a phenomenon of reciprocal appropriation. The destructive refrain holds only within the revolutionary process. But first we need to understand how a society without banks functions, we need to invent a new reality for ourselves. In the highest form of individualism, also in the American forms of the sixties, there are always two alternatives: either singularity is shared or it becomes individualism, which is something negative.

SCELSI: I understand what you are saying, but the critique you make of the black bloc is analogous to that made at the time of anarchist individualism, a critique with 150 years of history, with consolidated and bombastic topoi. The problem is another one. I'm surprised the hard critiques against the black bloc were conducted on two fronts: a) you have destroyed the banks, b) by destroying them you put the entire movement into conflict with the institutions. In both cases, maybe, the accusation should be relativized. The recent events in Paris demonstrate the real fullness of the phenomenon of the damages caused by the black bloc: thirty cars in three days in Genoa, while in Paris more than fifteen hundred in a single night of urban jacquerie. Maybe it is true only in part that the attitude of the black bloc triggered the muscular attitude of the movement, that it was the motor for causing

the repressive forces. In substance, I maintain that the black blocs are nevertheless a part of the movement, even in their rebellious, solitary, anarchic, individual dynamic. Therefore any attempt of expulsion from the movement leads me back to the verticalist management of the streets we already saw in the 1970s. What do you think?

NEGRI: First, the organization of the seventies doesn't exist anymore; the black blocs were therefore able to insert themselves into the movement. When they have insisted in their attitude, it seems to me that they were mistaken. Having said this, it doesn't mean that the black blocs are outside the movement. Second, and this interests me more, in these polemics there is the theme of the expulsion of violence, as such, from the movement. Some say that it is legitimate to use violence but only in a passive form or precisely, paradoxically, nonviolent. That doesn't have anything to do with Genoa, where violence was actively applied by the movements, well beyond the black blocs. But it is clear that the alliance between Bertinotti and the others that will soon be in the government that is going to take power revolves around the idea that a movement shouldn't in any case express a determinate violence that goes beyond passive resistance. This seems to me to be false theoretically and historically, morally and politically. A Left that imagines movements without the capacity to express themselves in a violent way falsifies reality and mystifies the nature of the movements.

The Bertinottian themes that matured after Genoa until the alliance with Prodi are only opportunist. This doesn't mean that violence has to be conceived as a fundamental element in the construction of a different society. It means, however, that in exodus there is always need of a rear guard that is ready to combat when

needed (Aaron, the brother of Moses, who defended with his rear guard the people of Israel from the troops of the pharaoh during the exodus, isn't a black bloc). Furthermore, there is always a divine violence, infinitely stronger, that throws the waters over the Egyptian army. We call it the divine discourse because violence is a thing that happens, it is the responsibility of destiny, it is a part of the materiality of interhuman relations. The interhuman relation can be violent, not because men want it, but because it is an event, like being born, growing, dying. Violence has the same desperate and potent reality of life: violence of misery or solitude, of exploitation or of war. My apology for violence is anything other than an apology of criminal acts, or of those predisposed to hurt the other. I only say that to eliminate violence from the political debate is banal, like thinking of being able not to eat and drink. Violence is a part of human reality.

SCELSI: However, you can't negate that the instrumental use of violence isn't a part of the constitutive idea of communism as transformation of reality.

NEGRI: I exclude it, as I said before. The conquest of the Winter Palace today doesn't have anything to do anymore with the communist project. The problem seems to me to be another one. It consists in the common and in the exercise of the common . . .

When one claims to eliminate violence from social relations—above all in a condition like that of today, dominated by a state of permanent exception—what does this mean? For me, violence is the capacity to bring death. What does it mean to eliminate violence? Either you base it on the constructive power of man, which is collective, technological capacity of transformation, and maybe it will in the end be able to eliminate death or however you rede-

fine it in a way that it isn't distributed by power; or you can be constrained to use violence in order to distance yourself from the death that power imposes. If, for them, violence is the fundamental form of command, for me it could be a useful instrument for distancing ourselves from death.

But the Left has never managed to put itself on the terrain of a realistic analysis of violence. From time to time it has experienced the image of it with pity and compassion. Only in the most acute revolutionary periods has it been shown to be joyous, because its power consisted in making death distant. Then there came Stalin and other dictators, and it entered into the sadness of power again. There was no longer a difference between the way in which the capitalists and bosses interpreted violence and the way in which it was understood by the socialist parties. Historical revisionism has completed the final act: it has traced back the revolution to that which the reactionaries call the ineluctable "misery of life," nothing other than original sin. Those who want to expunge violence from class and social relations today, when they aren't reactionaries (like [Martin] Heidegger), are simply revisionists, like Furet and Nolte, and finish up speaking to us of communist refoundations.

However, the new labor power and the men who live reading in the common their desire for happiness (I mean the proletariat of immaterial and precarious labor, cognitive and affective, today) feel violence like the arms of those who command them, as continual expropriation—increasingly unjustified—of their knowledge, as power that cuts the soul and every vital substance. [Franz Kafka's novels] *The Trial* and *The Castle* have become symbols of this new violence thus generalized and present everywhere. But it is precisely here that resistance is presented as

exodus, as a leaving of this world. If there will be a need for violence, it certainly won't be because we like it. Never before until today has violence been a long way from the desire to construct a new world and to practice it and enjoy it. And nevertheless, this new world doesn't exist, nor will it exist, nor will it ever be conceived and conquered by pretending that there isn't violence.

SCELSI: In Genoa, but also in everyday practices, we note increasingly a sort of ideological-political syncreticism. Many activists and people have, in fact, an attitude with some libertarian dimensions (also in the use of the Internet) and spurious elements, not organic, of social-communist ideology. Do you think that we are in the presence of an egalitarian syncreticism?

NEGRI: I don't know if I understand your question well. It seems to me that we are crossing a marsh or a river. We are in a type of interepoch or interregnum from every point of view, inside a transition of the general forms of government of empire, of transformations of the classes, but we don't yet know (even speaking of the global multitudes) the articulations between migratory movements and multitudinous structures. We don't yet know what it means to bring together precarious intellectuals, old mass workers, and immigration, we don't know what we are doing as far as demonstrations are concerned, and thus we entrust ourselves to a pragmatic, not theoretical, way of acting. Let's take May Day, the day of the socially precarious and also of the migrants: from the conceptual point of view, what is the common terrain between the precariat and the migrants? At the limit, they can represent two opposed points: the migrant is the hero of spatial mobility, while the precarious worker is the hero of temporal flexibility. But what brought them together is capital. It is a

unification that is thus a negative point and that doesn't yet give me a political articulation of the two situations. These are extremely difficult problems.

I think that ideological syncreticism, like any ideal, aproblematic form, is useless and damaging. It doesn't deal with the fact that we are truly in a real contradiction. This multitude is in itself, but not for itself, and the transition isn't easy. It is an alternation of moments, of taking conscience of some and not of others, of a totality of transitions, interruptions of tendencies and of drifts. Nobody has described the situation better than Deleuze and [Félix] Guattari; in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they uncovered these dynamics in an enthusiastic way, while in truth it is a terribly harsh reality. At the end remains the metaphor of the marsh, in which you can also encounter quicksand.

However, the Left is a very long way from these themes. Nor will it ever be able to resolve them, because it has sunk into the marsh up to the chin.

What are the responsibilities of the Left in the death of the young man [Carlo] Giuliani* in Genoa? To me, they seem to be many.

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* A young demonstrator killed by police in Genoa during demonstrations against the G8 on July 20, 2001.

7. MIGRANTS, OR THE END OF WORKERS' INTERNATIONALISM

SCELSI: There is an image that is now archetypal, deeply carved in our imaginations: the overcrowded boats of Albanian migrants in front of Apulian ports. Then, the typical Italian trick: after they have been collected in a stadium and fed with sandwiches and mineral water, they are sent back to the other side of the Adriatic Sea. Let's try to formulate the issue of the migrants in Italy and Europe: how is it configured?

NEGRI: Those boats full of people seemed like boxes full of insects, an incredible spectacle. They were attracted by the consumerist dream. I knew an Albanian intellectual in Paris who afterward became minister of culture in one of the first free governments of his country, and it was with him that I saw the images of the boats. He said that it was not only an escape, but an attempt to enter the magic garden of wealth and consumption, not so much escape from misery as grasping at a certainty of abundance. They did not perceive that the communitarian semi-barbarian regime in which they lived, between Vlorë and the interior mountains, was unfortunately better than the place where they would have lived in Italy. But television images and the frenzy of escape triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall led them to this. I remember when I was young, in the midfifties, at the beginning of the Algerian War, I found myself stopped on the Libyan-Tunisian border. It was remarkable. Buses that had been

in Mecca were coming, and the French, instead of opening them in order to let people get off, threw disinfectant bombs into the buses. They kept the pilgrims inside for fifteen minutes, then they let them get out and they vomited. Fifty-degree weather, disinfection . . . Colonial methods? Of course, but what's changed?

Emigration is contradictory. Companies want immigrants, and they need them even more because the international, global relation between the development of material work and technological innovation constitutes a cluster, an extremely complicated relation.

It's not true that we have immaterial and technologically advanced labor while in China there is only material, physical, Fordist labor. The two worlds, in reality, are intertwined. And here as well there is a need for material work in order to feed the upper class and there is also the very real possibility of innovating the system. The more there is a progression in the building of products in the immaterial system and in technological development, the more there is a need for substrata for the supply of material work. It is only in this way that competition can be maintained. In fact, I am convinced that the productive battle with the East will be won through the activity of big immaterial factories. In this process, immigration is necessary, but it is manual labor that has to cost less. There is a mad cruelty in this, a violence that brings us back to the capitalist mode of production, to be either subjected to or against which to react.

Immigration is the big escape toward the capitalist West that gives work and therefore a wage, and the wage allows a decent way of life. But the West needs to have a docile, flexible manual labor force to be able to stay in the game—thus, an intimidated labor force and for the lowest possible price. Therefore, it has to

be menaced and kept in biopolitical conditions among the hardest and most desperate that could be given. Boundaries that migrants cross have to be rebuilt within capitalist countries.

SCELSI: You said labor is necessary, but it has to cost less. Violence arises from this. But in the reception made by the Italian army for the boats overcrowded with Albanians or in the case that you reported of the French and their disinfectant bombs, there is a form of brutal colonialism that goes beyond the instrumental necessity of calling the labor force to order.

NEGRI: I think there is a lot of hypocrisy in the ex-minister [Roberto] Calderoli when he attacks immigrants, while the bosses utilize them as servants or waiters at home: it's a form of colonialism worse than that of the English, who maintained a cultural relation of distance and contempt. Here there is even fraternization, in the case of domestic services. And affectivity has become a commodity on the labor market, although very complicated, as every commodity is.

SCELSI: If we look at the Mediterranean as it was described by an historian like [Ferdinand] Braudel, we receive an image very different from the current one. Certainly, it was contested, sailed by all sorts of pirates, and in which navigators risked going out to open sea only in order to conduct their business in the best way. Nevertheless, it was a sea that allowed different people to know each other. Today, the Mediterranean has become a highway of death with established corridors and routes, businesses and industries, among which are those that are clandestine. How has this sea changed?

NEGRI: The Mediterranean is a place of opening toward the East

and the Middle East, but it is a contradictory place of opening because the Middle East is a place of revolution and, at the same time, a country that exports its labor force. Palestine, in this sense, is an extremely significant example.

Immigration is also undertaken by skilled labor power and not necessarily in bad conditions. When I say the Mediterranean I certainly don't mean the sub-Saharan zone but immigration that has a certain degree of compatibility with the productive systems of European countries. Fifty percent of the labor force coming from the immediate Mediterranean coast can be inserted in the industrial labor force at medium levels. It's not destined for agriculture or heavier levels of exploitation and is inserted at medium technological levels as mass labor force, in mechanics, construction, health services. Then there is the step down to agriculture and cleaning services. We are therefore in a situation in which homogeneity and concord could be glorified, a realized melting pot. A politics of welcoming is not pursued, however, for economic reasons linked to the reduction of labor cost. You also have to add here the harshness of the State instruments, like, for example, the administrative procedure for obtaining visas and for family reunification, which become terrible tasks for the immigrant worker instead of being a right or an award. This emerges, moreover, from their accounts.

The Mediterranean has become an absurd sea with highways of immigration on which an evil genius sometimes puts stones and nails in order to sink the machines that pass through it. The evil genius is a European agent that tries to lower the cost of immigration. We find again the big schemes of capitalist power: the use of terror to lower the cost of development and, at the same time, raise profits. Then there is the problem of the assimilation

of masses of workers inserted in the deficiencies and in the interruptions of the current transformation of the industrial and capitalist system. The Fordist modality has finished but only in the production of commodities; it continues, however, to be proposed as a hegemonic mode of social organization, as an irrational and inadequate relation between labor and nonlabor, between industrial labor and territorial organization. The Fordist relation between labor and ways of life has completely collapsed. It is in this vacuum of relation that the weak parts of the internal populations, especially immigrants, are inserted. And it is in this interruption of the socioeconomical order that the tragedies of immigration take place.

We are in the presence of a system of migrant forces that today is dependent on the violence of industrial selection, on self-regulating systems, or on international relations. Furthermore there's the failure to insert this population in the mechanisms of self-evaluation and socialization of the labor force. In relation to France, in Italy there aren't *cités*, those quarters built for immigrant workers during the seventies. In Italy there isn't a public politics of welcoming. Here, instead, that remains perverse and wild. In Italy there isn't any model of assimilation, of melting pot, neither American nor French; there is simply total anarchy, sometimes attenuated by the intervention of secular or religious associations, NGOs, and particularly generous social centers. We have today reached the number of more or less four million immigrants (legal and illegal). This is a long way behind the European average, and moreover, part of this flow is through Italy on the way to central Europe.

We need to make a further distinction, because Mediterranean immigration is more and more replaced by that from the East

(Romanian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Russian, Yugoslavian, from the Carpathians). This white immigration is preferred to the colored one. There is a terribly hypocritical racism in Italy, especially in Veneto, which is linked to the economic game of acceptance and at the same time of refusal, a refusal that is expressed in the form of extreme exploitation, through the lowering of wage guarantees and through the isolation/marginalization of immigrant populations. But white immigrants are preferred . . .

SCELSI: Why are there areas where local egoism is more accentuated? In France, there has been the clamorous refusal of the European Constitution, but we can think of the rediscovery of traditional cultures in Scotland and in Wales, or of exaggerated nationalism in Thailand or in Bhutan . . .

NEGRI: Italy remains a nation of a hundred countries with a political assemblage of thousands of different traditions and bell towers. But from a cultural point of view, this renaissance of the "danger" of a defacement of the landscape by migrants is stronger. Italy is also the country of small and medium industries that are hungry for a specific labor force. When Fiat needs workers, it whistles; the small factory in Veneto with a few employees instead fears losing its specificity if it introduces foreign workers. Moreover, I have some doubt of the honesty of these traditions that are being reborn. I've been very impressed by this phenomenon in Brazil. Here religious traditions, reborn or imported, on the one hand give dignity back to strata of people that are excluded from social life, but on the other hand, they build up a form of vacuum of social relations, taking citizens back to the divinity while they become reserves of votes for the parties of business. On the one hand, therefore, we have a sort of restitution of dignity and, on the

other, a form of business transcendentalism. Having said this, the problem of immigration is played out on two levels: from the lowering of wages to the removal of the capacity of being politically active from migrants. From this point of view, the perception of the social alarm that surrounds these people becomes more and more worrying. A social alarm that is not linked to the real crime rate, but to that presumed by organs of the press, power, and domination, linked also to a high rate of ignorance and to a presumed rate of indigenousness (Lombardian, Venetian, or other).

When I was still on probation and I went to Bologna, Florence, or Milan, I had to go to a police station to sign in. I was in the queue of immigrants, and naturally, I was allowed to go first, as I was a "certain Italian delinquent." I was in any case privileged in relation to the "presumed black delinquents." Of course, I gained hours, but I did it with tremendous disgust and discomfort. For me it was something that took ten minutes, for those "presumed delinquents" it took hours.

SCELSI: But how does the Left manage the migrant phenomenon? Are there similarities with the thought of the Right?

NEGRI: As long as the Left is prisoner of the problem of employment and of a conception of the job for life as the fundamental issue, it won't be able to develop and to resolve the theme of the integration of migrants in a decent way. As long as the problem of employment remains more important than the dynamic of the system, it is clear that the Left will always remain subordinate to the fear of the arrival of the immigrant labor force. I don't want to swear, but sometimes capitalist egoism is more open regarding the problems of immigration than working-class egoism, the egoism of the corporate labor force. But I can't understand why

the latter is so terrorized by the enlargement of the social base of labor. Moreover, an additional benefit that a nonhysterical management of immigration could give rise to would be in the rupture of the trade union corporations, which, very damagingly, are trying to define a general project of social development. But the Left is completely prisoner of "its" corporations.

OK, let's stop for now, but sooner or later we should start saying what the Left should do instead of what it is not able to do.

Even in France things have gone in this way. Faced with contractual needs and demands for the renovation of the work organization, etc., which did not come only from the employers but also from the new labor force, the Left was absent, or it even played a role of blockage, because of the fear that every positive stand on this issue could give an advantage to the Right in its blackmailing of fired, unemployed, and retired workers.

The problem of the Left has to be posed and eventually resolved beyond the terror that follows the desperate keeping of corporative defenses. Instead it concerns the reinvention of production around the free participation of the producer. The producer should be free and democratically capable. The immigrant as well.

The big problem consists in reinventing production with the planning of new forms of cooperation and association around big productive projects. The Net already demonstrates the possibility of all of this, but the nodal point consists in deciding to gamble ourselves in every way upon these transitions, above all when we talk about the production of services. There isn't a concept of the Left if it doesn't correspond to the capability to edify new forms of organization of production . . . Up until now we have only witnessed the depletion of the old, traditional forms of alternative organization of labor that were invented by the Left between the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Italy, for example, we have cooperative systems that are now managed with such an absolutely capitalist modality that they can try to mount a raid on big banks like BNL. It's the assimilation of cooperative organizations to capitalist organizations that has deprived them of any Left basis. This is even more paradoxical if we think that there are still forms of association and cooperation at very high levels in Northern Europe, in the ex-Soviet countries, in China, while in Italy we can't avoid the social-capitalist drift. In reality, the dimensions of our economical development could allow, even with the integration of immigrants, the experimentation of new forms of association and cooperation.

In Italy we are in the presence of an extreme corporative defense of the traditional labor force. [Sergio] Cofferati is the symbol of this situation. Personally I was against the defense of the eighteenth article.* I don't know if [Marco] Biagi was a great economist, but he applied what [Massimo] D'Antona said. His work was equivocal and maybe impossible, because any rule imposed to favor the mobility of the labor force doesn't make sense until adequate guarantees, namely an income of citizenship, have also been inserted in a body of rules. Mobility is unthinkable if there aren't minimum income limits that allow the social reproduction of every citizen. The work of D'Antona and Biagi, anyway, opened new possibilities of discussion.

Having said this, it has to be recognized in the end that a new mode of production that corresponds to the transformation of labor conditions can't do otherwise than to open itself to greater

* The eighteenth article of the Italian Workers' Statute (*lo statuto dei lavoratori*), subject of a referendum and extensive political campaign in June 2002.

flexibility and mobility. Already thirty years ago it was a fantastic image to go on imagining a labor force linked to the factory, and today it is completely unthinkable. But the Left remains linked to that model. The Left loves the blue-collar worker. This is an illusion, ideologically incorrect, because the fact of having overcome the factory is not a defeat but a victory for workers. The fact that the working class is no longer Fordist is a victory; the fact that hard work is not like in the past—the hard work of a man on the production line—is a victory. Capital understood this, because he was forced to, while the Left and the parties of the working class didn't. Or when the Left understands it, it does so on reformist, revisionist terms or on terms of betrayal, because it undergoes and legitimizes the transformation without risking the struggle in order to manage the transition.

We pass from the contradictions of the trade union movement that wants secure employment, to the positions of the Left parties that legitimate, through their economists, the most absolute and indiscriminate mobility. I don't think that there is the necessity of a revolutionary party for resolving these problems, merely a democratic government and correct administration would be sufficient. Anyway, the big problem now is that of the income of citizenship, because it represents the material network that is behind the transformations of the wage. Moreover, moving on the level of guaranteed income can allow us to reopen social fronts of struggle and of collective bargaining.

SCELSI: A good reformist party, a good reformist trade union, then?

NEGRI: No. Rather, a relation between movements and governments, real goverance. Translated, this means simply that every

problem has to be submitted to the movements and that the movements should be able to express themselves. In fact, governments can hardly make decisions if they don't continuously confront them with the proposals of the movement: the concept of efficacy of government is forced to confront itself with the movements. (We don't recall Foucault here as a joke . . . It's really what he said!) Representative power today begins to be in the movements. It's good to see how all of this is already happening in Latin America. After we pretended to teach them an impossible revolution, namely to be like us, they start teaching us a possible transformation, which passes through the continuous relation between government and movements.

SCELSI: Let's go back to labor. The Left has lost the capacity to move on this terrain, also on the level of its political representation. The so-called people of VAT (six to eight million people), one of the juridical faces of the flexibility and mobility of labor, presents an ambivalent dynamic. A small percentage of these people looks at this situation in terms of a process of self-valorization, while the largest percentage is forced to work without guarantees in a temporal horizon of great precarity. It's symptomatic that the Left doesn't intercept adequate political representation among these workers. We have an unprecedented situation here: the Left doesn't represent the world of labor anymore, or a large component of it, while it should be its standard bearer.

NEGRI: Therefore it's worth returning to the old distinction between the technical and political composition of labor, and recalling how they were placed in relation to each other.

For example, at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, technical composition: professional

workers who perfectly knew not only the modalities of their job, but also the cycle of production of the factory; political composition: conciliarism and, after that, Sovietism, namely, the claim by workers to lead the productive cycle. Then there was the mass worker, starting from the big crisis of the thirties, technical composition: workers subordinated to the Taylorist organization of labor, alienated in the factory, incapable of recognizing the complexity of the productive cycle; political composition: social struggles for the wage and the management of welfare as key for the social redistribution of income and the first reappropriation of the productive "common." Today we face a new technical composition of work: immaterial and of service, cognitive and cooperative, autonomous and self-valorizing. Political composition: it doesn't find political representation, and the Left is out of the game. The Left is nostalgic and merely reactive (as for the rest, it's functional to the harshest measures of the capitalist repression of living labor), and it is totally unable to recognize and, as a result, to refuse new models of exploitation. Now it exercises an authority that has nothing to do with the labor analysis, namely, with the technical composition of labor, but it is simply traditional and carries damaging and disruptive myths, like that of the "indeterminate" continuity of the labor relation. We are faced with absurd paradoxes, and after the defense of the thirty-six-hour week there's no opposition to the continuation of work until the age of sixty-seven, sixty-eight. Why? Because it was compatible with the initial scheme: the diminution of working hours and the lengthening of the working lifetime. But today who wants to pass his or her life at work?

SCELSI: Let's go back to the migrants and the attitude of the movements. The movements acted on this theme [i.e. attitudes toward migrants] by attacking, in a not-merely-symbolic way, the

centers of provisional detention (in Italy, Germany, and elsewhere). Then, however, when the migrants start to enter the social circle of life, other agencies (secular and Catholic NGOs) intervene and accompany them into society. Isn't there perhaps a contradiction in this attitude? Shouldn't the movements also be present in this second phase?

NEGRI: The question already reveals a state of crisis. Here, there seems to be a problem of powers. Resistance is still expressed in a strong and immediate manner by the movements. On CPT, the work done is excellent from all points of view, just like the placing into crisis of the Bossi-Fini law (which inherits the Turco-Napolitano law).*

You pose two problems. On the one hand, the equivocal insertion of the NGOs in these processes. The work in Italy is undertaken by secular and Catholic NGOs in a fundamentally correct way, from providing support for the permission to stay [*permesso di soggiorno*], to problems of family reunification, to assistance for sickness, to the question of housing. On this front the Catholic organizations are legitimated (except when they accept the job of warders in the CPT, but now there are even red cooperatives present there). On the political terrain, I am convinced, however, that this doesn't work. The NGOs are the worst that you could find, even if, note, the NGOs that work on immigration aren't analogous to those involved in the scandals related to drug "rehabilitation." However, the transition from assistance to political activity is blocked, unlike what should have happened and has always happened in the history of the working class.

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* Centro di permanenza temporaneas are detention centres for migrants without the required papers.

Here the great problem, still unresolved, is that of the composition and recomposition of the multitude. What is the relation between migrant mobility and precarious flexibility? What is the relation between old material labor power and the new immaterial labor power? This is a fundamental theoretical problem with respect to which I can invent interpretative lines—these, however, are difficult to test on the concrete terrain of organization. What is the political composition, that is, the form of political organization of mobile labor—flexible, cognitive, precarious, etc.? Mobility and flexibility have elements of nonpredictability, which eventually present aleatory associations indeterminate in their mode of appearance. The cognitive and cooperative power of labor has a creative, nonrepetitive vivacity that feeds the innovation of the productive and political processes. It is, however, evident that a social regime of wages, that understands these phenomena, that encompasses the new constitution of labor is perfectly imaginable; it is the request of an income of citizenship to represent the fundamental schema and project by means of which these phenomena can be interpreted and organized politically. It is, in fact, clear that mobility and flexibility of labor are qualified by the cooperation and cognitive reality of labor: labor is constituted in a unitary and plural manner (both at the same time) on the social terrain. At any rate, here we are in an abstract discussion. There are, in fact, formal elements (theoretical and practical) that can lead us to that representation of the process and to that formulation of the demand for guaranteed wages or the income of citizenship. But (this is understood) we haven't resolved anything. We are left with the following question: how can we bring these forces together concretely and politically?

SCELSI: Without falling back on models of the past . . .

NEGRI: Also this seems to me to be a transition from in itself to for itself. It is not, however, the progressive transition of a Hegel that leads us toward the general class, that is, the administration of public law. Here there is simply the misery of the precarious and autonomous worker of the second generation, on the one hand, and on the other, the migrant, the mobile factory worker, always available. However, I believe that the Left doesn't pose the problem of political mediation constituted between these ideal types, not even from a distance. Regarding the models of the past (parties, trade union, Soviet), it is obvious how incredibly distant from us they are now.

SCELSI: Do you see these polarities in action in all countries or are there points at which this phenomenon emerges with major force?

NEGRI: It emerges where the system of welfare was strong. In the United States, it is difficult to recognize the importance of this form of resistance and struggle because the precarious, autonomous workers and the status of the immigrant have always existed (and have never been resolved), while that isn't the case in France, Italy, Germany, and in the end, also in England. In Spain, it is a recent phenomenon. In Spain today, 35 percent of labor is constituted by precarious forms of labor. In France, the situation is similar. However, the *stagiaires** are organizing, and yet it's possible that they won't be able to invent adequate, disruptive, and progressive forms of organization.

SCELSI: In all this business there emerges an inadequacy of the Left, both from a conceptual point of view and in terms of its con-

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* The French equivalent of a US intern.

crete way of presenting itself. Do you think we can speak of the end of proletarian internationalism?

NEGRI: For the West the end came with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, while in the East the crisis came in the events of the relation between the Soviet Union and Chiang Kai-shek during the 1930s, after the repression of the insurrection of Shanghai. These two dates are fundamental in the politics of the alliances of the Russian national state, unscrupulous alliances perhaps necessary (as we have already discussed in the first part of the interview) but certainly immoral, with Nazism on the one hand, and with Chinese bourgeois nationalism on the other. These are the fundamental rupture of worker and communist internationalism, and yet, despite everything, it managed to survive. And nevertheless, now, the movements aren't internationalist anymore but globalist, cosmopolitan, they go across nations, countries, continents. It is common knowledge now that the order of the nation-state tends to a situation of precarity and partiality, which is, however, fixed and controlled by imperial dispositifs, that is, by the capitalist world order. There is now an immense literature on these phenomena.

But let's come back to us, to the end of proletarian internationalism. It is more than evident that the traditional socialist and communist movements are unable to assume a new global frame within which to define their politics. The political defense of the nation-state, the trade union defense of corporative labor, the insensibility in front of the new figures of the labor power—all this crushes the old organizations of the workers' movement into chauvinist positions. It isn't an accident that these organizations are no longer capable, inside the great continental unities that today represent the reality of empire, of forming new modalities of trade union and political organization, workerist and proletar-

ian. The migratory processes determine the definitive crisis of traditional organizations; they denounce their reactionary character. In all probability, the movements that haven't compromised with the traditional organizations of the workers' movement will be able to operate inside this crisis, inside this rupture and will be able to do it with the capacity to put down roots on a continental and global scale. I have the impression that only in this way will a new International proletarian base be born. But isn't this exactly the form in which it has always been reborn?

8. IRAQ: COUP D'ÉTAT IN EMPIRE

SCELSI: Previously, you were speaking about the necessity of realism of politics toward the war. Translated into the scenario in Iraq, that could mean that we can't get out of there, leaving behind us a situation of chaos. What does the military occupation of Iraq mean for you?

NEGRI: It's insupportable from any point of view—ethical, political or strategic. Iraq was the American attempt to get its hands on Empire, an attempt at a coup d'état by means of permanent war, now a constitutive element of imperial development. It is clear that the problem of who commands the global market was posed and progressively developed from the end of the Soviet system. Bit by bit, the Americans have elaborated a unilateral and exclusive conception of their command of globalization. The decision of the war in Iraq therefore constituted the definitive point of a project of monarchical constitution of the global order. The conjugation of preventative, permanent war and unilateral hegemony has led the American presidency to nominate rogue states and to articulate a strategic politics in the globalized world in three points: a) the attack on Iraq and a reordering of all the states of play in the Middle East, that is, the attack and domination of all the primary energy supplies of Europe; b) the second attack on Iran, the second rogue state, a classic intervention in the underbelly of the ex-Soviet Union and Russia; c) the third nomination, that of Korea, is aimed at North Korea, a platform for going into the great Chinese space.

American politics during Bush's first mandate was deployed on this axis, and for now it has remained there. The Left made a gesture of anger for reasons related to the European project, which was made manifest with the negative French and German reactions. These certainly were not reactions motivated by pacifist reasons; they were qualified simply on the basis of the interests of power. There was an abasement of the Italian Left on this position. In parallel, we have seen the utilization of pacifist instruments in the polemic against Berlusconi, directed at an internal political use; it had nothing to do with the combative pacifism of a true Left. In this, the Left betrays not so much its history, which brings together antimilitarism and pacifism, as much as it betrays a critical political function in the contemporary situation, because it can't be forced to accept the war as a constitutive element of the new world order.

The war appears in a very strange way, inside a world unified by a series of political tendencies of organization and juridification of the global market. The war has the function of continuously reorganizing the global order; it has a police function more than that of a destructive war. It is both a war of low intensity and a police action of high intensity. The war has the function of consolidating the relation of power of the great industrial and financial powers against all that which can be harmful for them. What interest does the Left have in being in this game? I really don't understand. In this war of hegemony exercised by the United States and some of the great European powers, the game isn't worth the candle.

A while ago, I was invited to Rome by the Greens in Parliament. There was Minniti, responsible for security for the Democrats of the Left (DS [Democratici di Sinistra]). We spoke about Europe, and Minniti affirmed that the fundamental European problem was

the constitution of Europe's own armed forces and that, however things went, it was a case of constructing strengthened cooperation among single European states in order to exercise a European military capacity. The Greens were against this position, while Minniti maintained that to accept Europe automatically meant accepting this project. I don't believe that this is how things stand. Strengthened cooperation at a European level can't be realized if not within projects of war. One could, on the other hand, present projects of defense and in this sense develop democratic and political initiatives of popular armament in the Swiss manner. Nevertheless, thinking of Minniti, it seems to me sickening to enter into the constituted game of a new imperial order marked in terms of war. The Yugoslavian crisis wasn't enough for these Italian ex-communists to feel themselves like warriors?

SCELSI: With the first alliance of 1991 against Saddam, some theoretical figures considered the war a constitutive element of the new political global scene. But this knowledge, which was collective and on a mass level in 1991–92, was then lost. According to you, why did this radical change in the function of conflict happen?

NEGRI: I have the impression that the pacifist tendency is still very strong. But I can't affirm that this predisposition to pacifism corresponds to gaining a precise knowledge of the function of the war today in this world. It is true that in this continuity of war you lose the capacity to be always present and active (what sadness, those faded peace flags!). But this is a part of that temporal asymmetry that power uses when faced by the power of the movements, in order to extinguish them in the long run when it doesn't manage to defeat them on the ground immediately. There is, however, another element that corroborates the current analysis of Iraq: the Americans aren't win-

ning—they are on the edge of defeat. There is a latent and widespread satisfaction that the Americans are losing the war, certainly not in terms of the corpses they leave in the field but because the movements of resistance have been generalized in the entire Middle East. The instability in the region has increased instead of diminishing, and American politics and its unilateral project of domination have thus been blocked everywhere. The unilateral American order is falling; the Iraq War monopolizes the force of the superpower and neutralizes its capacity to act in general. What is happening in Latin America, in America's backyard—a realization of autonomy and independence, and a very strong opposition of contrast to the Yankees—would have been impossible, for example, without the war in Iraq.

We are faced by a general crisis of American foreign politics that should make us relatively content. This is a very important fact. If we now come to the thesis of [Samuel] Huntington on the clash of civilizations, we need to admit that, at the moment, Islamism is winning. The American attempt to sustain the moderate regimes (Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia) is in danger, even if we don't yet understand the possible fallout on the Middle East chessboard. The situation is serious: the *New York Times* asked how Bush will be able to sustain another three years in government given the situation. What's at stake aren't the polls, which at any rate are falling for Bush, but American national stability.

SCELSI: However, the strategy asserted by the neocons, a group of distant Trotskyist origins that influences American foreign politics strongly, consists in imposing the democratic model on Iraq and then contaminating the entire Middle East area like an oil spill. After three years of war, the same neocons have claimed a series of successes, despite the ups and downs: the first is that of having managed to carry a large part of the Iraqi population to the

vote (referendum and elections); second, they have awarded themselves the merit of an effective dominance of Lebanon and of the current difficulties of the Syrian government; finally, they have laid claim to the politics of [Ariel] Sharon and the dismantling of the settlements in Gaza. Doesn't the idea of the export of democracy at gunpoint perhaps remind us of the export of socialism with arms?

NEGRI: You risk taking seriously the superficial appearance. I am very convinced that democracy (in a radical sense) is today the arms of liberation of the peoples of different nations. But this doesn't have anything to do with the American neoconservative vision, with its forms of power, maintenance, conservation, and reproduction of order. American democracy exported to Iraq or affirmed in Egypt means the maintenance of a class structure and of indecent exploitation that doesn't improve the current situation. It is without progress, with the exception of the smooth insertion of these countries in the process of globalization. They are, however, countries with weak economies, and with internal blocks so strong that even the progressive effects of globalization could turn out to be secondary. The politics of exportation of democracy, when not a mystification, is inefficacious, beyond the successes proclaimed by this politics of domination in Syria and Lebanon (and also in the Ukraine and Georgia). In the end, they are weak events unable to modify the overall picture of the Middle East. We know how much Sharon's policies in Gaza were dictated by the impossibility of maintaining and constructing the great Israel. In turn, the maintenance and strengthening of the colonies in Palestine become essential for the Israeli conservatives: war is assured. There will never be peace under these conditions. I am pretty convinced of this catastrophic prediction. Even though I believe in the existence of Israel, I think that its faithful allies will be forced one day or

another to intervene in order to stop its expansionist tendencies, which are surely dangerous for the world order. It is paradoxical that in the moment in which a global cosmopolitanism is affirmed, it is precisely the Jews who are outside it, attracted by nationalist ideologies of a nineteenth-century type. I have always thought that the Jews have a right to a homeland, but I have never thought that this could happen in the ancient and barbaric form that is Zionism.

Furthermore, regarding Lebanon and the Orange Revolution, the nature of these political transformations—Georgian, Ukrainian, Lebanese, not to speak of Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan—is of an absolute fragility, so much so that, once past a moment of noisy propaganda, these revolutions tend to dissolve like snow in the sun. What it imposes in the end, even in these situations, is the law of hegemonic groups in the global political configuration. In Lebanon, the support of a part of the population for Syria remains fundamental. The UN, the French, the Americans can certainly intervene, but the very close link of the political class with the Syrians remains central in Lebanese politics. In the Ukraine, the fact that half the leading group is closely linked to the interests of Russian development more than to the turn toward Europe is completely clear. It is useless now to delude ourselves into thinking that the new Ukraine will be the old Poland of Solidarity; from every point of view, it will never be that.

The question of democracy has always been difficult terrain, but it becomes very dangerous terrain when you transfer it where democracy was imported by the neoconservatives. When the Left attempts to intervene on this terrain it recites a script that isn't its own. There exists, instead, another terrain, that of real and absolute democracy, on which we should fight without timidity or hesitations.

SCELSI: Let's go back to the Middle East and, in particular, to Islamic radicalism. There is a mobilization in both the Shiite and Sunni communities. Indeed, the Iranian—Shiite—revolution of 1979 represents a model of radicalization for many Sunnis. What is the situation today?

NEGRI: The question is open and difficult. The progressive political classes in the Middle East have always positioned themselves in the sphere of a tradition of the Left, socialist and nationalist in general. We have a history of almost a hundred years, which goes back to the middle of the nineteenth century, of a Left that lives in Islam and combines itself with figures from the Islamic religious tradition, even though it is essentially secular. Anyway, in this way it deepens its contacts with some religious movements. This Left had its highest moment in the 1950s, with the attempt at populist revolution related to the socialist forces of [Mohammed] Mossadeq in Iran and to the pan-Arab movement of [Gamal Abdel] Nasser. It was in the Egyptian mosques in those years that political groups of the Left were formed. Imperialist reaction operated on this condition, using as its armaments theological fanaticism to eliminate secular and socialist currents. Support was given to the Muslim Brotherhood, to similar forces, and above all to those economic groups from Saudi Arabia that would have favored propaganda against socialism for the benefit of Islamic extremism. This reactionary process connected and consolidated during the first Afghan war, at the moment in which Islamism supported by the West becomes a winning force. It is also the moment of the birth of Hamas in Palestine, sustained by Israel against the socialist and secular forces of [Yasir] Arafat.

However, these Islamic forces, once they were constituted and began the first religious wars, found themselves in conflict with

the United States, not so much in terms of a clash between civilizations (Orient against Occident), as in terms of the democratic question. In effect, demonstrating that democracy American-style is something better than the *ummah* is very difficult. From the point of view of the reproduction of the elite, of the distribution of wealth, and of the quality of life, I have many doubts that American democracy can be presented as a great model in the current situation. This obviously doesn't mean that the religious regimes and theocracies are any less horrible. And yet, history teaches that relative differences don't determine the absolute criteria of choice.

SCELSI: Regarding the Arabic socialist parties, your reconstruction valorizes the attack of Western countries. But what are the Arabic socialist parties' mistakes? The Algerian case is emblematic: the FLN [Front de Libération nationale] led the national liberation war with great ability. Then, struggles in the leading group and a set of mistakes, some of which were induced by the World Bank, generated substantial and intolerable modifications to people's actual living conditions and state welfare programs. In doing so, they gave rise to FIS [Front Islamique de Salut] and to internal jihad. Today the FLN doesn't exist anymore . . .

NEGRI: It's not so much this disappearance that is frightening, which was also due to ideological reasons in which the national, instead of the social, factor prevailed. Rather, it is the general lack of a working class (apart from Algeria and, partially, Egypt): all of them are substantially agricultural countries. The only social and political force is Palestinian emigration in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, which has been an infectious factor of workers' struggles (in the oil industry there were many Palestinian workers, like in Saudi Arabia). But this is the only really large example. Then

there are the immigrant working classes (the Algerian, but that was in France). The great force of religious mediation of the social of which Islam is capable enters into the defeat of ideological Arab socialism, just like for the revolts during the autumn of 2005 in the French *banlieues*, in which the unique and very precarious element of social mediation was still represented by the religious authorities. In reality, here there is above all confusion or heteronomous goals. All of this is extremely dangerous. In Arabic countries the same thing happens. When the social fabric is disrupted (as the imperial powers want), religious forces go to extremes. Also in this case we were in front of a sort of heteronomy of goals, in the sense that religious movements (which had to stop political and social protest and were financed for this reason) are themselves infected by the protest.

SCELSI: The new Islamic integralism calls, above all, for a supranational war of liberation, a new form of internationalism that comes from the base.

NEGRI: What does "from the base" mean within a religious structure? It's difficult to keep using these definitions even if, in my opinion, there are elements of them in the explosion of the Islamic revolts that you recall. My thought now goes to the definition of the anticolonialist war of liberation rather than to other experiences of popular struggle.

SCELSI: In other places, you've mentioned the "beginning of the end" of American hegemony.

NEGRI: American supremacy at the end of the Cold War, in order to maintain itself as such, had to make the jump toward global hegemony. What could be done in order to occupy this global

space, which before had been bipolar? How to impose global order? The Americans do it in unilateral and monarchical terms, reorganizing their presence around the world as a dispositif and a guarantee of a power that could always be referred to American interests and hegemony.

Some critics refuse the concept of empire in order to affirm instead that in the American case it's still a matter of classical imperialism. It's rubbish. The unilateral American project could hardly avoid failing. And we saw it immediately. I don't mean that the concrete end is imminent, but already following Davos in the last years it's possible to see that most of the big multinational companies didn't want to be in the game—even the American companies were embarrassed when they found themselves within an univocal game of power that claimed to be imperialist. Therefore, there immediately emerged the need for mediation, so much so that after the first Iraq War we saw the recomposition of Russian power, the consolidation of Chinese politics, the unpredictable emergence of Latin America, which got up again from the massacres perpetrated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Then there is Europe, which since the very beginning did not accept the American plan for numerous reasons, both of the political elite and of commercial interests. Factually, the constitution of a single European currency was a very serious checkmate for the Americans, just like the capacity that the euro has to impose itself on markets is considered a serious disturbance for American unilateralism. Far from being the projection of a classic imperialistic project (and American in this case), the global order is configured more and more against American hegemony. On the contrary, it's a global order made by powers diffused and consolidated around four or five continental poles.

The attempt to construct a global hegemony is in crisis: the American coup d'état on empire has not succeeded. The result has been the reinforcement of other polarities that prevent the Americans from moving themselves into those positions of advantage that they have enjoyed until now in global foreign politics. Great continental poles are being formed that put American hegemony in crisis in a serious way. It's still not very clear what Washington's reaction will be, but if the crisis of US foreign relations should spill over into internal relations and the social structure of North America, then there would truly be a problem.

SCELSI: In your analysis, Great Britain has remained in the shadows. It has always been a great ally of the American project. It's enough to think not only of the Iraq War, but also of Echelon. On the one hand, Great Britain is part of the EU; on the other hand, it distanced itself from Europe when it didn't adopt the single currency.

NEGRI: It's a complex situation. I believe that most politicians thought that after the approval of the European Constitution the problem of the relation with England would have ended by being posed in terms of a definitive rupture. This was a possibility present in the Europist plan of Fischer. There was a part of European social-democracy and the Green Party that absolved [Tony] Blair's domestic politics but broke with his foreign politics. This possibility was clear until the defeat of the European Constitution, an event that ambiguously put England into the game again, and only because there is Blair. It's likely that with a conservative figure in charge, the same thing wouldn't have happened.

Any revival around a project of European unification won't include England: if the latter enters into the European project, it

will happen, I believe, in subordinated terms, once Europe has already constituted itself. There are a lot of political and cultural events that put distance between Great Britain and Europe; even during Blair's revival, after the constitutional crisis (a revival that wanted to be generous during the UK's period of presidency of the EU), I saw political vacuity and a total lack of passion. A Left that is interested in the European Constitution (a central point, because a new Left can exist only in an European context) has to keep Blairism and England away.

SCELSI: Don't you see a contradiction between American neocon politics and English New Labour?

NEGRI: On the contrary, it seems that Blair gets on better with Bush than he did with [Bill] Clinton in the past. Basically, English national interests are profoundly linked to the most conservative American politics. I don't think that during our lifetime we will see significant variations regarding this geopolitical determination.

9. THE COMMUNE OF MADRID

SCELSI: On many occasions you have termed the experience of Zapatero as "the Commune of Madrid."

NEGRI: The Commune of Madrid is due, more than to Zapatero, to the terrorist massacre, to the consequent emotional reaction of the population, and to the attempt at falsification made by the Right. It was an attempt that was linked to an internal articulation of power—almost fascist—for the repression of the Basque movements. Popular indignation responded to this mystification, building itself around an affirmation of the truth ("Our Basque brothers aren't responsible for this massacre—the terrorists are") that was imposed through new technological modalities. Thanks to cell phones, within three days it was possible to mobilize the Spanish Left against the bases of falsification and to put the [José María] Aznar front in crisis. Here the Net became political.

The true problem of the Net, despite many efforts to insert corporeality into it (as in the case of pornography), consists in the absence of bodies. In the case of the Commune of Madrid, a network of corporeal relations was created instead. Through cell phones there was a process of physical accumulation and of progressive aggregation of passions that led to the surrounding of the power bases and to the overturning of the polls' predictions in three days. It wasn't a victory of political representation, but, on the contrary, a constituent tension with strong immediate effects that was able to wipe out all the criteria of so-called political real-

ism to impose a reversal of the political plan and to produce, consequently, the withdraw of the Spanish troops from Iraq. And after that, as it was really a movement of bodies, it was able to rouse a formidable liberation in the sexual habits of Spanish people. It was thus demonstrated that the power of the Church and of the Right is much more linked to the inflexible tradition of institutional arrogance rather than to personal convictions. Power asymmetries exist that are completely accepted unconsciously but that are reversible—like those linked with the clerical organization of society, above all.

The formidable aspect of the Commune of Madrid was especially in this accumulation of indignation and will of transformation, which was able to overturn the asymmetry of power from a political and moral point of view.

SCELSI: I have read analyses that sustain that, beyond the extraordinary popular mobilization during the days that followed the attack, the change in the electoral trend had begun even before the attack. The socialist party had already started a transformation of its own political profile three years earlier: Zapatero and his collaborators, in the conquest of the party, decided to apply a strategy based upon complete transparency, with much more openness toward society, stimulating militants to express themselves on many points of the political line. What do you think?

NEGRI: That seems a secondary aspect to me. The transformation of Zapatero would not have had the possibility of expressing itself if it hadn't linked up with such an important event. Moreover, I am not convinced that Zapatero is a great reformist; from the point of view of social policies, he seems to me to be Blairian. I don't mean in the strict sense of Blair and [Anthony] Giddens, but on posi-

tions, nevertheless, strongly related to continuous dialogue with industry and financial power. This assumes specific characteristics in Spain; in fact, the modernization process has not yet been completed in the transition toward democracy. There is certainly internal democracy, strong democratic sharing, but the internal conditions of its production are still imperfect. Big Spanish capital still has uncontrolled margins of development and of class domination in internal infrastructures, in the financial organization of the flow of savings and of welfare. It is an extremely aggressive capital. These groups condition the social politics of Zapatero.

It is certain, anyway, that Aznar made a mistake with his equation: alliance with the old groups of the Franchist regime, redeemed in a capitalist model of development. This would have allowed the stabilization of capitalism inside and its global opening. This equation didn't succeed.

The radical change imposed by Zapatero consists instead in the perception of an open capitalist development (on the terrain of infrastructures and traditional industries) on a global level. It is here, I think, that we find Zapatero's intelligence more than in his transparency. While [Felipe] González betted on the basic structure of Spanish capitalist development and Aznar was still bound by old corporative forms of bargaining, Zapatero breaks the bank in the areas of innovation and globalization. Next to this, the moral question—gay marriage, women. The rupture made by Zapatero is real, even if it has touched levels of socioeconomical development relatively, because he's humiliated the Church and the national conservative tradition.

SCELSI: This has been a long-range intervention—against masculine violence at home, for equal feminine presence at work and in politics, laws on civil weddings—policies that cost nothing and

that in Italy wouldn't happen even with the hypothesis of the government of Prodi overbalanced on the Left . . .

NEGRI: In Italy there is a relation with the Church in terms of subjection, governed by the Concordat, which exists in Spain, too. I am willing to bet that in Italy the Left won't make any of these reforms that cost nothing, apart from PACS, maybe, but in a reduced version and only for heterosexual relationships.* In Italy there isn't the opportunity that Zapatero had to play on particularly dynamic sectors like infrastructures and services. In Italy the situation on this level is very static. Furthermore, I don't see Prodi moving on the ground of the reform of customs.

On this level there would be a big field of study to open up: the relations between sexuality and democracy. Normally, the propaganda for open sexuality rises within a frame of an attack on totalitarianism; even the Right is disposed, when totalitarianism is in crisis, to open up unscrupulously to pornography and to deny it once they have taken power. Then pornography becomes a freedom displayed by the Left, until the moment in which the Left as well becomes shy and backs off from its intentions. There is a Polybian cycle in this kind of event. These dynamics are evident in different stages of political transition. In Russia, for example, with [Boris] Yeltsin, newsstands were full of pornography, exactly like in Spain after the fall of Franchism. It's not an accident that the Spanish transition has been used as a fundamental model of reference for Eastern Europe after '89.

SCELSI: In your use of the term "commune," in reference to the

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* PACS, Patto Civile di Solidarietà (Civil Agreement of Solidarity), is a form of civil union that was proposed in Italy, but not successfully implemented, to acknowledge partnerships outside of state- and/or Church-endorsed matrimony.

experience of Madrid, it is possible to glimpse the configuration of a new Left . . .

NEGRI: If it is so, it should be a Left that tends toward absolute democracy. But it's better to specify, because every time that the term "absolute" is used there is the risk of confusion. Let's pose a central question for political analysis: what is the relation between the technical composition of labor and of citizenship and its political composition? Now, it has to be noted immediately that today there is no production of value if not immaterial value, which is carried by free brains capable of innovation; freedom is the only value that doesn't simply reproduce wealth but that puts it into circulation. Political composition can hardly be something other than the recovery of this power, of this radical freedom based on equality and cooperation, on repeatedly creating the event. The Commune of Madrid represented this force: it seemed a strange mix of technological elements, indignation, and affirmation of the truth, but in reality it has revealed itself as a source of freedom. From this point of view, the Commune of Madrid is connected with a new idea of the Left.

The new Left is unimaginable if not in terms of production of subjectivity for the production of freedom; secondly, it's imaginable only as a subject of management of the common—no longer management of power but of the common, to which power is subjected. This is fundamental: it is the recognition that the reality in which we live is an absolutely common given and that our singularities move in this commonality. We exist as singularities within this common. We are individuals and realities that live and express themselves in the cohesion of these singularities. The relation in which we put ourselves to each other is common. And this relation is productive, the common is a production that sin-

gularities express as language, as subjectivity, and as life in common in a dimension that is absolutely biopolitical.

The common is the network, the series of material goods that enables us to reproduce ourselves and to produce, to move and/or to allow ourselves to be carried from one side of the city to the other, etc. It is the series of things that makes us able to build language (libraries, books, "open" informational technologies, communication instruments as such). The common is the whole series of exchange instruments among subjects that has become the fabric of use-value, subsumed in freedom. Therefore the Left is new and democratic when it applies itself to the management of the common and to the equal construction of ever-broader networks of cooperation. Until all of this is consolidated as a program, a new Left won't be able to exist. Factually, what is the Left today? It is nothing other than a form, among others, of management of capital and of the capitalist structure of power. Every socialist keeps the skeleton of capital in the cupboard. There isn't a socialist who has never imaged him- or herself as a manager of capital.

SCELSI: Let's go back to the theme of the Left. You talked about management of the common in its philosophical-political definition: we can define the fundaments of a new Left only when reasoning in radical terms. What you say of the common regards exclusively the *Lebenswelt*, the forms of life (in philosophical terms, the singularities that are sublimated in the common). But this analysis may have the weakness of avoiding the problem of productive forces as they are.

NEGRI: It's true, I don't think in any way that the concept of multitude today has the capacity to pose itself as a political structure, firm and definitive. I think we are in a transition stage in which

the multitude is still looking for its decisional capacity. What seems to me fundamental to point out, however, is the fact that in the current political situation a decision that isn't participatory isn't imaginable. There can't be unilateral acts of force anymore because power increasingly displays a dual nature. There can't be obedience that doesn't constitute itself in a continuous and open reformulation of the rules. It has to be concluded that the reality of power today is profoundly modified. Problems that we pose to ourselves are therefore established on completely new ground and every reference to the ancient categories of the modern state has to entail differences or even ruptures.

It's true that there are comrade-philosophers who affirm, on the contrary, that the state of exception has become the norm of democratic life. This seems grotesque to me. We can't describe the current situation with the models of power of the thirties. It's true that the bosses always try, but it is also true that they never succeed. The American defeat in Iraq in this sense is emblematic.

To maintain that today the decision is always somehow participatory and that the nature of power reveals a certain duplicity doesn't mean, on the other hand, that one adheres to conceptual proposals of the self-management type. The concept of self-management allowed the professional nineteenth-century working class to gather in the technical organization of labor the moment of participation and decision; we would be mad if we appealed to this category today, because it has no meaning now compared to the figures (global-political and financial) of contemporary production. This current condition translates itself into the constitutional theme of continuous governance. Power is broken in two. In order to be realized, it no longer has the possibility of determining a norm, then executing it subsequently in a concrete administrative act. The norm can't be

realized without consensus, which has to be seen as the participation of subjects. Of course, there are always moments of strength that are exercised, but this context no longer assumes a vertical or pyramidal form. Instead it is represented as a set of parallels, a flow to which liminal obstacles are opposed. There is no more verticality, starting from which rules and events are organized.

To your correct objection about the relative extraneousness of the thought and of the practice of the common from the current productive and political reality, I reply by attenuating the contradiction and asking you if the solution will ever be able to be given in relatively homogeneous terms.

This illusion seems to be implicit in your question. But in this way you bring me back to an old model of political discourse: the discourse that requires a unitary productive figure of decision.

SCELSI: My objection refers to a discourse of levels . . .

NEGRI: Look, I don't think we have a philosophy of history that brings us to plurality instead of to unity, just as we don't have its opposite either. There isn't a philosophy of history. What there is for sure today is the posing of power in front of a rupture of the administrative nexus, namely, of the formal axis that determines the unity of the ordering. Today, the dual element of rupture is absolutely fundamental on the internal and international levels. It is crucial to articulate this problematic; a Left that doesn't pose these problems to itself is nonexistent. A Left of government or of struggle makes me laugh. It's not possible to be one or the other, if not by cheating. Instead the point is to choose one or the other of these levels, case by case. And we should know that to govern today is not a unitary operation, but is open, divided, always in search of negotiation and shared decisions.

SCELSI: But if we think about the theme of participation, it seems that there is a duality. On the one hand, there is a request of participation, but on the other, a simplification of decisional fields is underway. Let's think of the procedures of the production of laws: today the political processes of mediation have collapsed. It is sufficient to observe how the Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (CNEL) has been exhausted compared to the vision of the founders of the Constitution or how the preliminary discussion on the law related to savings has been subjected to the so-called Aspen method, that is, to the screening of a private institution under the attentive and "bipartisan" guide of Giuliano Amato.

NEGRI: I agree with you. The CNEL is exemplary. It is the repetition of an old corporative model that, however, has effectively found a new and lively capacity of expression in the modification of corporative interests. It wouldn't have assumed such an important role in Italy between the sixties and seventies if it hadn't been for its capacity to modify itself, beyond the formal structures that formed it, in relation to the change of social interests and of the corporations that supported them. From this point of view, the Catholics in the CNEL have been extremely important because they were able to develop dynamically the corporative tensions of society.

Having said this, there remains the other problem. Today we no longer know which is the figure of representation of interests: it's not the party and it's not representation in the corporative sense. Precisely in these days, while I was thinking about the fights in the French peripheries, I reported on the proposal of a reformist communist, the mayor of Saint-Denis, which is based on the idea of a new Grenelle, that is, an agreement similar to the one between the unions and the Pompidou government made during 1968 and 1969 that led to a redistribution of income. But

Grenelle had representation behind it: the Fordist workers who mobilized themselves for wages, critique of hierarchy (and affirmation of equality), and welfare. But on what can we make an agreement today with these young people who live in the *banlieues*? And above all, by means of what representation?

It's a swarm of precarious work; an agreement can only touch their common, but who defines the common? We turn back to the initial problem of opening continuous bargaining for the definition of the very problems that are at the basis of the political debate today. The Left should organize this debate, but instead it presents yet again generically corporative dimensions when it doesn't support positions of compromise that are reformist in the Blairian sense.

I want a Left that knows how to swim in the sea that we have in front of us and in which each of us is immersed, a Left that knows how to reinvent itself. There isn't a Left outside of this condition, but for this what is needed is democracy, democracy, democracy.

SCELSI: You also need to have the economic levels on which to intervene in order to be able to redistribute. According to you, can the experience of participative balances work in this sense?

NEGRI: It was an important experience, but it has been exhausted as a model. It had enormous importance in placing in evidence that the relations that were behind the participative balance were infinitely higher and larger than what one imagined. The true problem was, however, how to go from slow motion to the big screen. There is a problem of new elites, of new administrated structures not separated from the great majority of people, of new multitudinous structures; there is a problem of innovation of the political.

The parliamentary system of representation has gone bad—you can't do anything there. We need to invent new things. The

instruments of participative balance are in the end only a craft goal and can't manage the confrontation with industrial, or better, postindustrial reality.

SCELSI: The model that you glimpse and that plays on the concept of the common good needs its own practical translation, for example, of businesses in the territory that manage governance. However, this model could also be interpreted as a dismantling of the forms of democracy as we have known them up until now. Thus, instead of being a form of democracy even more radical, as you hypothesize, this environment of management of governance could in the end reduce the spaces of decision.

NEGRI: That doesn't seem to me to be the case. And it seems to me to be a trial with the intention of accusing me of limited democratic sensibility, in this case at least. You need not forget that there is a great difference when we live in conditions of real subsumption,* when all the modes of life are subjected to capital, that is, within a continuous reproduction of the real produced by biopower. It is this process that determines the ever more dense, profound, articulated contradictions. A paradox? The fact is that, unlike how the philosophers of hypermodernity think, the more this world is unified; the more it is divided; the more there is command, the more there is disobedience; the more there is unity, the more there is antagonism. A normative process that closes within unitary forms of decision is today completely unthinkable: there will always be somebody to break the eggs in the basket. When you no longer speak of continuous revolution, you are forced into contradictory continuous administration. Such is governance.

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* Translated from *Aufhebung*, a term invented by Hegel, that was then used by Marx for the absorption of a smaller concept by a broader more universal one.

SCELSI: In practice, you propose an extension of authorities to the different levels of society . . .

NEGRI: Authority not of control, but of participation. I believe that today you can begin only on the conditions of an open constituent process. We have the common of the Internet, a given that seems to me beyond discussion, and we have the forces that want to appropriate it for themselves. Now we have to construct an agency in which there is present all the forces that have an interest in the common in order to define a politics of maintenance of the Internet in free and open terms. The same thing could be the case for public transport or water, etc.

Inside these processes there can be elements of conservation, of blocks on innovation, because these processes aren't simply constitutive, and therefore every time little revolutions will be necessary. I don't know how to see in other terms the reopening of a constituent process.

Today, in effect, we run into problems of a conception of democratic society (antithetical to that propagated by the Americans) based on a unitary conception of society—a theme that I have studied for a long time.

It is the new global experience that allows me today to repropose the problem in completely different terms with respect to the constituent thematic of [Emmanuel Joseph] Sieyès, with respect to the juridical form of the third estate, which is represented in political constitutional history as a state of right, and with respect to all the other bourgeois experiences of constituent power. Nothing other than a reactionary fetish, today. Thus, the Bolshevik Revolution and the State of the Soviets didn't manage to define an alternative because they were sucked into a capitalism of overdevelopment. On the other hand, today we have the possi-

bility of connecting new forms of labor with new forms of community, of singularity and thus of becoming the multitude. It is here that a new constitutional imagination is born. This is what the Left has to do; otherwise, it isn't the Left.

SCELSI: Why do you maintain that the constitutional state is reactionary?

NEGRI: Because it defends private property and doesn't recognize the common.

SCELSI: It is born from the expropriation of the common.

NEGRI: And delegates, that is, invents a system of representation and a system of division of power guaranteeing that this system can't be changed. Save for the fact that the internal crisis today carries it to a critical level, that of governance, after which we don't know well what could happen.

SCELSI: We are in a hazy political phase . . .

NEGRI: We are in a phase of complete transition from the internal and international point of view. We are in an intermediate phase that has precisely the characteristics of the English interregnum between 1648 and 1688 . . . "Goodbye Mr. Socialism," exactly like the revolutionaries of that period said "Goodbye Gothic Empire"!

SCELSI: From the glorious revolution without blood we will found the Bank of England.

NEGRI: We will found the Bank of the Common. Christian Marazzi argues some interesting points regarding this. The financial world is the only authority that—in our world—poses unity of measure (of labor and of exchange). How do you make this

measure democratic? The problem today is to understand, for example, the fact that pension funds are all gathered in a global financial capacity and therefore represent a measure of unified and accumulated labor—and these certainly aren't only investments and speculation. [Noam] Chomsky, for example, simplifies everything, considering these funds pure and simple instruments of exploitation. But they are also the result of labor and effort, which is then managed in a capitalist manner, that is, in order to increase exploitation instead of diminishing it. How do you transform this communism of capital into a communism of the multitude? How do you manage the World Bank? A bank that is already of the common, how do you manage it in common?

SCELSI: I'll put a question to you through the rearview mirror. In the search for new theoretical instruments there is always the necessity to look at old things, as, for example, the workers' movement and its inheritors have always used the concept of class. Can this vision of class still be useful, from a sociological point of view and from the point of view of political analysis—or should we abandon it definitively? In your analysis, attributing everything to the multitude, the question of class, while adequate to the times, was buried beneath the surface.

NEGRI: I don't have any difficulty saying to you that the concept of multitude subsumes that of class. For a simple reason: the concept of class is a concept of exploitation. I have never considered class in a static sense, a raw earthly race. For me, the concept of class is modified continually by the relation of force that is defined by capitalist exploitation, and every time it's modified according to new economic and social determinations and conditions and, furthermore, to conditions of sex, age, race, territory. The concept

of the working class, for example, at one time excluded women, the poor, the blacks or Asians if they were outside the direct capitalist relation. Instead, the concept of multitude, which comprehends the concept of exploitation, obviously also comprehends that of class. When one thinks of exploitation (which exists today), one speaks of an exploitation that extends throughout the entire society in the real subsumption of the world of life under capital. And therefore the project of rebellion, of rupture, of struggle is positioned in the same space in which exploitation is determined. Here, therefore, the behaviors of the working class and those of the other exploited (the precarious, women, immigrants, pensioners, etc.) can be coherently related—certainly, with enormous contradictions—but no less serious than those contradictions that are produced in the regime of the factory between a simple worker and a technician. Here the problem is that of the construction not of a static unity and mythology, but of a continuous articulation among all these subjective elements.

Maybe it is an impossible undertaking, but you can't attack the attempt to do it, because it is often by means of the will to transform an impossible that you go from an illusion toward reality. And this seems to me to be fundamental. Truthfully, the construction of a unitary concept of class has often seemed impossible. The polemic of Lenin against the privileged workers of England and Germany is characteristic—but it hasn't stopped the revolutionary process. We had moments in which we had to argue with women or indigenous peoples; however, this condition of new polemic makes me happy.

SCELSI: I wanted to ask you to clarify the concept of singularity and event.

NEGRI: We have always moved on the analysis of cycles (cycle of

mass worker, cycle of social worker . . .) in epistemological terms and inside this real context (words and things). It is on this terrain that the technical and political composition was determined. Today I believe that, as there is this sort of total investment of the real by capital, there is also, consequently, a transmutation of labor and of its relation to ways of life. Now, inside the new structure of immaterial, cognitive labor, ways of life are not simply something objective (which we have to assume as such). Rather, they are presented instead as activities productive of subjectivity and always, continually constituent of a new world. Finding ourselves in this situation, we must begin to think not only in terms of cycle, but also of threshold, of accumulation, and explosion: a continuous universe is now substituted with a fractural universe, a universe of measurable activities is substituted with a universe of surpluses. From this point of view, the concept of event doesn't constitute the real but indicates it, constructs at any rate a metareality in which to move ourselves. But we need to be careful, gather the occasion, the *kairós*, because, in short, this metareality also becomes static and dead if *kairós* hasn't invested it.

The concept of threshold seems to me to be fundamental because it allows us to move from the cycle to the event. It doesn't mean to cut the cycle in half but to render the cycle coessential to the analysis of the event. In this phase of transition the cycle becomes syncopated, arhythmic; the fundamental problems are those of the threshold of accumulation and *kairós*. For me today conducting inquiries remains fundamental for any type of political action, but at the same time it becomes a specific attempt (adequate to the historical moment) to measure, to give solid measure to values that constitute this new reality. And the concept of singularity is within it and constitutes it.

10. LULA: GOVERNING WITH THE MOVEMENTS

SCELSI: Lula, the Brazilian experience. A country that you know very well, that you visit often and not just recently . . .

NEGRI: A strange phenomenon—new, problematic, and open to many hopes. We are speaking of a country with 180 million inhabitants, of the largest geographical area of the earth, half of it wilderness, a country where the colonial biopower was consolidated over time in a frightening way, eliminating blacks completely from political and civil life, a country (like all of Latin America, however) that has experienced crises, expansions, repressive moments, dictatorships. However, it is also a country in which the first explosion of workers' struggle in the seventies expressed a political party that has managed to link together four essential elements: a working class extremely organized not in a Soviet form but autonomously; a rural class of the agricultural proletariat that wants to develop its own autonomy; intellectuals sufficiently educated in the elaboration of programs and strongly oriented to public instruction; and a strata of entrepreneurs relatively free and dynamic. The birth of the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores, that is, Party of Workers) has constituted a radical rupture that has upset the traditional equilibrium of the country.

Brazil is like China in that at least a third of its population is not isolated from global development; this is the portion of its population it can count on. In this country you therefore had to

break with dependency and develop, in global interdependency, a radical alternative on social and political terrain. The victory of Lula has occurred at the same time as the strong growth of alternative globalization, and Lula has placed himself in this development: it is the most intelligent factor of the entire business. Lula and his comrades have modeled Brazil's social and political program on historical conditions and within the new geopolitical spaces in which they find themselves operating.

Like Argentina, on the other hand, Brazil was squeezed heavily by the IMF. When Brazil exited the dictatorship with the accounts of the State in complete disarray, the IMF acted like nothing happened. Then in Argentina the debt problem went on longer. In Brazil it was blocked by the government of industrialists of São Paolo, with [Fernando Henrique] Cardoso.

SCELSI: Cardoso is a sociologist with Marxist training . . .

NEGRI: Yes, a man "of the economy of dependency," educated in a Western model of socialism, with the illusion that it could be applied in Brazil, forgetting that this is a country not only underdeveloped, but biopolitically fixed, blocked by a monstrous racial hierarchy (for example, there aren't blacks in Parliament). It is a country in which the official and racially consolidated propaganda maintains that there is no racial problem and that it is a gray country, neither white nor black. But it is the gray of Hegel, the night in which everything is confused, a profoundly racist power, the power of slave drivers.

It is a country with depths of misery and desperation, of underdevelopment, of low culture, etc., in which there remains a condition of slavery exemplarily shown by the systematic destruction of young blacks (one hundred thousand are killed in a year,

numbers of genocide). On the other hand, there existed and exists that very powerful *réseau* of liberation theology. It acts like a revolutionary force and like a transversal element in the political acculturation of the excluded multitudes. When Lula and the PT put themselves in this situation, they did so with a very ambitious program: it is a real democratic coup d'état. But the situation is difficult because if it is true that Lula rides on an electorate fascinated by his charisma, on the parliamentary front he remains in the minority. We will come back to this later, however.

Let's note for now that in this very difficult situation Lula and the leadership of the PT understand a fundamental thing: you need to resolve the problem of the economic dependence on which capitalist domination is based and around which the old Left illusorily exercised its programmatic model. To break with the model of dependency means to undertake a series of costly operations: to pay the debt and then to entrust yourself to the mechanisms of the market, gaining with that the possibility of not being blackmailed anymore or of not being able to be blackmailed; to invent new canals of global circulation of commodities and finances that no longer depend on the central capitalist system; to overcome the institutional blackmail of the IMF, which still obliges you to submit to certain economic-political schemes, etc. This rupture is provoked by means of a curious discovery: the south-south* relation (Brazil, South Africa, India, China, etc.).

SCELSI: A new Bandung . . .**

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* Geopolitically, not geographically, speaking.

** The conference of Bandung was held in April 1955 under the direction of prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Sukarno, and Gamal Abdel Nasser. It counted with the participation of twenty-nine countries of Asia and Africa and marked the beginning of the movement of nonaligned countries.

NEGRI: Yes, but not of words, of trade, rather. China and Brazil sell complementary things: China absorbs food and Brazil absorbs steel. This new axis should be invented, the blackmailing and imperialist criteria of dependency should be blocked, defending (given their enormous export capacity) Argentina and thus obliging the IMF to withdraw in the face of Argentina's refusal to pay its default and to schedule its payments over a period of time. With this operation Brazil becomes the hegemonic country at the regional level and invents, against ALCA (the North American project of a continental common market), Mercosur, an association among Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. At the same time, it supports the Left that wins the elections in Uruguay and Paraguay. Then there is another political, economic, and cultural pressure on the Andean countries to construct an alternative around the Andean axis; it therefore intervenes in Bolivia. The victory of Lula defines a continental political process. There doesn't exist in Latin America an alternative to the political project promised by Lula and the Brazilian PT. Now, above all recently, the Bolivarian Venezuela of [Hugo] Chávez was presented as an alternative to the project of Lula. But it is obvious that this alternative is purely ideological, very abstract. Chávez is a very good and intelligent man, but he still hasn't resolved many of the essential problems that the democratic renovation of Latin America is dealing with. In Venezuela in particular, the relationship between political power and the capacity of developing economic-productive alternatives still seems to be in deficit. Certainly, this doesn't mean that the new leading revolutionary class that gathered around Chávez isn't trying to construct new lines of intervention. However, things seem to be much more uncertain. There remains the fact that the Bolivarian Revolution has given an

extremely strong impulse to the processes of continental unification that traverse Latin America. The energy wealth of Venezuela can be, from this point of view, a fundamental element both in the construction of an industrial politics in Latin America and in the strengthening of exchanges on the south-south line.

SCELSI: The capacity of political initiative in a few years is surprising—hadn't Cardoso already started?

NEGRI: Six years ago, Cardoso played foully; his operation finished in a North American reorganization. There wasn't the idea of autonomous development. Today Cardoso is placed at the center of the new American operation to weaken Lula.

Seeing this attempt at destabilization, I remember a recent encounter with exponents of the Brazilian trade union CUT. They said to me, "At times we ask ourselves if it wouldn't be more useful to have military power, like Chávez has, because our respect for the democratic constitution allows the bosses who possess control of the means of communication to attack us, for example, on corruption." It was a really shameful attack because when you speak with these bosses they say to you that "Lula isn't part of the elite, he isn't worthy, he's a half-nigger. We let him get elected, he only had to guarantee us that he didn't have our own defects. It is clear that we are corrupt, and therefore not only has he usurped our power, but he is corrupt like us."

SCELSI: Is the accusation of corruption true?

NEGRI: It is very true. They systematically paid the small parties to support Lula's laws in Parliament. Who is corrupt? The system. Lula wouldn't have been able to govern in a different way, because the small evangelical parties (which are so active and numerous

in the Brazilian Parliament) would have been paid by Rightist opponents. Power functions in this way. Lula didn't have the absolute majority. In Latin America the responses to such a situation are two: either corruption (so-called democratic corruption) or the military solution. [José] Dirceu organized the entire operation covering Lula, while more serious in my opinion was the position held by the Trotskyist and Maoist Left, who disassociated, thus strengthening the campaign against Lula.

The reality is that Lula has broken the mechanism of dependency, inaugurating a new South American centrality in the process of globalization organized by Mercosur. Recently, Bush went to Argentina, but he was greeted by a protest. The four states of Mercosur asked him to go back home. Even Chile, still governed by the Chicago boys of [Augusto] Pinochet, doesn't want to know about NAFTA anymore. Now that [Michelle] Bachelet has won in Chile, this tendency will be further accentuated.

In Brazil the process of revolutionary rupture against social inequality was evidently postponed to benefit the search for new international equilibrium, necessary for governments to reestablish a certain measure of autonomy from capital. Thus, while residual Trotskyists and Maoists attack Lula, the large trade unions and peasant organizations are in the game; they understand what is at stake. While the CUT is historically linked to the PT, the Sem Terra (twelve million people with an exceptional capacity for mobilization), though protesting about the slowness of agrarian reform, don't directly attack the Brazilian president.

The leadership of the PT has reacted badly to this history of corruption and has shown an extreme and ingenuous sense of self-guilt. To this business you need to add violent and mafialike expression of force against the PT (the mayor of a city close to Rio,

three days after the elections, found himself faced with twenty-six corpses killed by the mafia). But I think, without being Machiavellian, that this is a case of maintaining a position, that the end of reforming a reality important from a strategic point of view and central in the politics of Latin America can justify the means used.

Inside this reality, blocked by an effective biopower exerted by reactionary Brazilian and North American forces, we need to invent new democratic forms in order to defeat the biopower that today still crosses people, colors, age. There are ninety words describing mestizo in Brazil, and these names correspond to specific social functions. It goes from absolute white to absolute black . . . We need to break all of this. An old comrade of mine, now a university lecturer in Rio, tried to help blacks enter the university. It's a sort of positive discrimination. You know that we are dealing with a mystification, but in reality it helps, if not to break, then at least to weaken, that type of exclusion. Blacks are the very large majority, but they don't have to create identitarian movements. They need to insist instead on the processes of liberation so that they can develop from identity to difference. Blacks need to decompose the political game on this terrain.

Then it is a case of linking this battle of freedom to the productive terrain, to make it understood how important it is to requalify the productive web in cognitive, inventive terms.

The last question, and not the smallest, is the relation between government and movements. It is perceived in a deeply problematic manner, even by the leadership of the PT. How do the movements become active? Beyond participatory illusions, the point is the force of construction and rooting of the movements. I don't undervalue the theme of participation, but we need to comprehend it inside mass solutions, individuating adequate

methods; the melting pot in reality implies many levels and transitions, and the same is the case for any democratic mechanism.

Now the Brazilian situation seems interesting on a global level, not only because Latin America is organizing like a caliphate with respect to the imperial model (a break with dependency, autonomous lines of development), but also because in Latin America they are trying a democratic and radical attempt at transformation. Even when it sacrifices transitions that are difficult to resolve, it nevertheless still manages to construct a very strong potential of attack.

SCELSI: From your picture there emerges a dialectical relation between government and movements. But, more concretely, what distinguishes the experience in Brazil from the usual relations between government and movements as they have historically appeared? I am thinking in particular of Mexico in the period of agrarian reform . . .

NEGRI: I don't want to generalize. The question is that in Latin America we are faced with a constituent process that is articulated in a precise way. It isn't the generic third estate of Sieyès; what is happening is the concrete consolidation of the masses, with their universal allure. There is always the corporative danger, but there is a great difference between the corporation of the producers of grain and that of the bakers. If the corporation is always mystification of the difference of class, around an illusory unitary interest between employer and exploited, sovereign and subject, on the other hand, the so-called corporativism that is taken up inside the movements discovers its fundamental qualification in exploitation. It is therefore in the liberation from exploitation and in the construction of the common that the poles of the political constitution are defined.

SCELSI: In analyzing the current Spanish experience we were saying that in a constituent process it is necessary to rethink the forms of politics, of the production of decisions. And then we said, hypothetically, that spurious juridical forms like agencies could be useful. My question is: do we have in Brazil formulas or experiments that go in this direction of theoretical novelty?

NEGRI: There are the experiences of participatory government in Porto Alegre, then there are the commissions for agrarian reform and for all the programs and problems on which there is now a sort of "council" in which all the political forces meet, which in reality have to assume a very high capacity of decision. However, these mechanisms are still imperfect, unequal in their development and in their practical efficacy. For example, the agrarian commission can very well have resolved all its problems, but what happens if, once the program is done, they no longer have money for buying tractors, or if the program becomes contradictory with other programs?

SCELSI: There is a form of planning?

NEGRI: Yes, in a democratic sense—not capitalist, not socialist. Forms of interdependence are alive inside.

SCELSI: Gilberto Gil's interpretation of intellectual property rights in the Brazilian experience seems interesting to me. It is a useful interpretation not only of single authors, but involves the terrain of the common. It opens a space relative to the instruments of labor, from seeds to software programs, involving rights of citizenship.

NEGRI: The affirmation of the open source movement is a part of the process of globalization, insofar as it is a mobilization of the

highest communicative and productive power. In Brazil, Lula's government has tried to struggle against all real and presumed monopolies that concentrate on the Internet, and it has managed to affirm the liberty of transmission, guaranteed by public power. It is an important transition in the constitution of a New Deal, of a Latin American New Deal that alludes strongly to a radical innovation of democracy, or to the superannuation of the capitalist relation between production and domination, toward a multitudinous redistribution of products and toward a new (social) organization of productive capacities.

SCELSI: While you were talking about Lula's corrupt dealings with the evangelical parties, you also noted the presence of liberation theology. How can we define the picture of Brazilian religiosity in political terms?

NEGRI: From a quantitative point of view, Brazil is the largest Catholic nation in the world, but it also has the highest number of conversions from Catholicism to evangelical churches. On what does this destabilization of Brazilian Catholicism depend? Catholicism was an element within Brazilian biopower, and this relation breaks when the relation between biopower and movements reopens with resistance to the dictatorship and, consequently, with the restarting of the democratic process. During the dictatorial period the large evangelical religions appeared, combining elements from different environments (voodoo, Satan worship, eschatological tendencies of the native and black traditions) and recomposing this religious eclecticism in the enthusiastic forms of evangelism.

At the same time, liberation theology explodes, which is a miracle of charity. Its inventors are dancing figures who discover that

Christianity doesn't have meaning anymore if it is not linked to poverty and to love. And they interpret the Brazilian reality as ravaged by biopower and by capitalism, recovering eschatological and angelic, futuristic tendencies.

SCELSI: There is an ancient tradition of the relation between religion and politics . . .

NEGRI: What remains of the indigenous religions are the cults of defeat; on the other hand, liberation theology has quickly become a religion of the body, of the expansion of the productive passions of the community, of the reappropriation of the earth (the link with the Sem Terra is structured on this). On certain aspects it can be criticized, for example, on its cult of family property of the earth, which is a backward attitude in the face of the economic force of the great landowners or the producers of genetically modified soya.

This is one of my critiques of the PT and Sem Terra. It seems to me that the political and religious movements are still too tied to the theme of education of the peasant rather than to a program of the use of the great technological means for the end of defining structural transformation of poverty and the large assets. They educate, but they stop there. Certainly, education is a very beautiful thing, but when there is then a clash with the oligopolies, they are in a difficult position.

To conclude on the Brazilian activist Left, politically and religiously: we need to remember that the insistence on participation has also led to practices of self-government that are now very diffuse. Governance in and of the contemporary state owes much to these experiences. Maybe we are utopians; it seems to me, however, that these political processes and the passions that govern them are fundamental.

SCELSI: There also exists here a deficit of political, more than juridical, study on, for example, intermediate governances. You would easily uncover a bitter truth: whoever occupies the field first and with force wins. An emblematic case was the business of software. In order to approve the laws of intellectual protection regarding software, the international association of producers of software organized at the beginning of the nineties a capillary propaganda, juridical-political, inside the different political institutions for the purpose of convincing the individual deputies that their position was the only correct one. Subsequently, the authorities haven't done anything but acknowledge the arguments sustained in this preliminary campaign. The true difficulty of the movement, I think, consists above all in studying the problem of how it has been configured up until now and then understanding the critical points of governance, because at the moment the great powers are triumphing.

The other theme that I wanted to pose to you, also regarding Latin America, entails an enlargement of perspective toward Argentina. The crisis of neoliberalism had an almost prerevolutionary evolution, with assaults on supermarkets, self-organization of production, proxemical production of paper money . . . But then this situation seems to have produced a mouse . . .

NEGRI: Let's go slowly before saying that it was a mouse. Now there is in process a recomposition of the industrial fabric that includes self-managed industries with not irrelevant support from the State—a mixed system. Furthermore, there is a situation of recomposition of the middle class in spatial and cultural terms, crossed by the question of the rights of man. In short, the middle class isn't what it used to be. The relationship between structure

and superstructure in this case has exceptional importance; after this crisis for the first time there is a middle class turned to democracy. The national secretary of the Argentinean government for the rights of man explained this to me thoroughly: the middle class of his country is composed by a classic point of view, that is, around fundamental themes of the infrastructure: cleanliness, security of the neighborhoods, guarantee of savings. But it is also composed by a democratic point of view. You need to remember that the Argentinean middle class had sustained the dictatorship, or at least they had seen it as necessary. In this perspective, the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have assumed a constituent role. The *cacerolazo* was inserted in the constitutional structure through the problematic of the rights of man. On this, all among them that participated in the coup and in persecutions of democratic and communist militants were punished. It's a unique event. In Brazil, for instance, it hasn't happened and in Chile only partially, while in Argentina this has assumed very strong levels, with very strong popular support and the reversal of traditional juridical-administrative structures. Finally, *piqueteros* have appeared in Argentina, which is the third big aspect after the economic recomposition and the recomposition of the middle class on rights.

Today *piqueteros* certainly don't have the power they had previously. The middle class as well is no longer the same (it's sufficient to think of the introduction of artificial proxemical paper currency that recalls [John Maynard] Keynes or to think of barter forms, for example, between psychoanalysis and hydraulic services). But *piqueteros* resist, and they are obtaining results more on the welfare side rather than on the occupational one. Why is this happening? Because in Argentina the process of the precari-

tization of labor is extremely strong. It seems that *piqueteros* have understood this. I mean, it seems that they have understood that the epoch of wages is finished and that the struggle has moved from the level of a fight between capital and labor regarding the wage, to a fight between the multitude and the State around the income of citizenship. *Piqueteros* in Argentina, in a situation of extreme crisis, have anticipated the global proletariat because they have proposed this new terrain of struggle. On the other hand, we have to consider that the Argentinean crisis has, as we can say, accelerated the processes of globalization not only from an international point of view (as the struggle between Latin America and FMI), but also from an internal point of view: big global capital rushed to Argentina in order to acquire public and energetic services, and to colonize the Pampas and the big spaces of Patagonia, etc. Argentina has found itself in the middle of globalization's cyclone. Can we be surprised, then, about the fact that *piqueteros*, who are the last representatives of a mass labor force, are moving toward goals that are those of the new cognitive labor force? We have to be thankful to the *piqueteros* for having offered to us this breath of victorious postmodernity.

The last elections in Argentina saw the extraordinary success of [Néstor] Kirchner: his candidates, including his wife, have won the elections against the Right Peronists. Now Kirchner has the absolute majority in congress. Also very important is the fact that not only the populist Right has been defeated, but also that the pretension of the old liberal Argentinean radicalism of representing the reconquest of human rights has been razed to the ground. The Montoneros have blown away this mystification. With their elegance and their intellectual cynicism, the liberal-radical Argentinean, [Jorge Luis] Borges and all the others, have hidden

repressive operations at Pol Pot's level. They didn't see people who were tortured, massacred, and then thrown into the sea from airplanes . . . They have also, these hypocritical and faithless intellectuals, hidden the adoption of the children of communist militants . . . Stop . . . Argentina is strange: when I asked where these explosions of brutality and mad cruelty came from (underlining that Argentinean society is not as racist as American society), nobody knew how to answer. In reality it was an experience of class struggle. As an old militant of this type of struggle, I couldn't believe that it would be possible to push it to such a level of hate. Probably today, through the actions of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, humanity in its entirety will have relief and will perhaps take shelter from the repetition of such odious violence.

II. DAVOS: THE COMMUNISM OF GLOBAL CAPITAL

SCELSI: Davos, the annual meeting of the pinnacle of global capitalism. How do these meetings work? Who is co-opted?

NEGRI: The reason for these meetings is the difficult communication that exists among capitalists. The first meetings of this kind were organized in the sixties, while in the seventies they fell under the political umbrella of the Trilateral Commission. They are meetings during which what is already exchanged in the holy rooms of power is communicated. In short, at the origin there is the need for transparency and political communication. Events like Davos develop when people of power—capitalists, managers, financial figures, journalists and people of media in general, and sometimes even soldiers—come together. It's a sort of big senate of global capitalism that gathers around specific themes, contingent and with a generality of project but also with great practicality and concreteness, in a climate that is very favorable to them.

In my opinion, what is important about Davos is the fact that it expresses a capitalist consciousness of globalization. Of course, some Arabic sheiks or Chinese-Thai-Taiwanese capitalists also participate in this meeting, but on the whole it is an encounter among whites, with a clear European and American centrality: a sort of Vatican of capital.

At Davos, capital appears not only open to innovation, but

above all it wants to offer an image of civility. Here capital doesn't present itself only as financialization or as a political superstructure, but as a way of life; Davos, somehow, anticipates the biopower of globalization, where capital wants to be not only command, but also a lifestyle. Also for these reasons, on many occasions it was an event particularly open to trade unionists and to the Lefts in transition, in particular those from the East. [Mikhail] Gorbachev was for some years the big star there. On many occasions Davos played the role of central event, and it was eclipsed afterward by the novelty of the antiglobalization movement. Behind all of this there was the will to make Davos a structure of thought and of mediation that could reflect the internal needs of capital.

What are the internal needs of capital? The fundamental need is to express its power not only as a form in itself, but for itself. Hegel would have said, to transform "civil society" into the "general class." That is, it was a matter of answering political questions like, "Which are the problems that we, the capitalists, now have to resolve?"

Attention wasn't turned toward problems that can in any case be rearticulated through the continuity of the political flow (through institutions like the UN, WTO, IMF, WB) but toward taking consciousness in general. Davos has been, somehow, an astonishing thing, a project of internationalization of capital (beyond markets and traditional barriers) that has become real for a moment, a somehow decisive magic moment.

Davos is the symbol of the overcoming of imperialism, the realized dream to put together, beyond national dimensions, the unity of the capitalist project on a global level. This process realizes itself, on the other hand, through the banks, financialization,

in short, the complete "bankization" of all capitalist social relations.

This project is also an attempt to absorb productive activities, wages, and savings of workers within the financial process: the privatization of retirement funds and of welfare had to be transferred immediately into a controlled financialization from the global point of view. This was the great dream of Davos, and it's called "communism of capital."

Exactly as Marx—in some formidable pages of the third book of *Capital*—wrote about the "socialism of capital" regarding incorporated companies, where capitalists transformed the productive relation of exploitation into a relation of circulation and domination for the incomes that didn't end directly in the retribution of necessary labor, thus today we participate in the attempt to transform social savings into direct investment through financial processes.

All of this is possible because behind work, exploitation, saving, and investment, a new entrepreneurial form is positioned based on the General Intellect and on cognitive labor.

How does cognitive labor produce? In a different way compared to classical material labor. The latter still needs to rely on production instruments offered by capital: fixed capital, which enables production, is offered to variable capital (namely, to labor power) by capital *tout court* (namely, by constant capital). Labor instruments are preconstituted by the bosses, and the workers use them. Marx explains to us that in this way the worker, in fact, becomes variable capital, that is, part of capital, to the extent to which he or she is subsumed and subjected to capital: the worker exists within capital.

Instead, today, when the General Intellect becomes hegemonic

in capitalist production, when, that is, immaterial and cognitive labor become immediately productive, intellectual labor power now frees itself from this relation of subjection and the productive subject appropriates for itself those labor instruments that capital preconstituted before. We can say that variable capital represents itself as fixed capital. The productive subject therefore brings with itself, at the level of the General Intellect, an extraordinary energy that is able to break the capitalist relation, that is, the structure that makes the worker exist within capital. Conclusion: I am productive outside of my relation with capital, and the flow of cognitive and social capital no longer has anything to do with capital as a physical structure in the hands of bosses.

Around Davos an ideology of financialization is elaborated that is nothing less than the attempt to keep these fixed capitals that have already become "independent" together, and it is a process that moves and raises enormously the productive mediation in the exploitation of labor. If fixed capital is now singularity capable of imagination, in order to put it to work there is the need of a new machine. This is the paradoxical "communism of capital," the attempt to close by means of financialization the global machine of production above and beyond the productive singularities that compose it. It is the attempt to subsume the multitude.

SCELSI: Let's take a step back. Starting from the end of the seventies, capital revitalized itself by leaning on transnational forms of managing the global economy. All of them—the WTO, the WB, the IMF—are endowed with instruments that are able to take part in single national economies. These three great organisms are managed by expertocracies that represent global capital interests. If this description is plausible, why then the necessity of a

moment like Davos, in an historical stage of overcoming national centralities and in the presence of transnational dynamic organisms? Why this transition to "consciousness for itself"?

NEGRI: Transnational capital doesn't cross nations but is consolidated beyond them. Multinationals are not companies that are interested only in what happens within the single nation but in the process as a whole. Capitals, finances, currency transfers, commodities certainly touch nations, but they traverse them not as powers, but as flows.

We thus need to have a biopolitical view of political economy, and therefore we also need to have an internal criticism of biopolitical economy. It is no longer possible to talk about it in the separate figures with which economy, political economy, and the critique of political economy have always recognized and lived these relations: the wage for worker, profit for capitalist, land revenue for aristocracies, in addition to the political structures that guarantee the relation between wage, profit, and revenue. Now these types of relations don't exist anymore. The monetary relation of exploitation is now completely arbitrary; wage and profit are categories (like others, such as revenue, etc.) that have to be read not through the law of value but within a global relation that has to be considered essential to any measure of wealth.

Davos represents the moment in which this realization becomes, of course, ideology but above all capitalist cooperation. Capital relations (that is, among capitalists) occur either in the form of agreement and contract (Davos) or in the form of war (Bush). In the Western world, this common management of development, based on agreement, has become a crucial element based on two aspects of the abstraction of money, namely, financialization and appropriation of intelligence. Societies—not single

factories—produce through intellectual labor and networks. If it doesn't manage to control all of this, capital goes into crisis and its only way out of crisis is war.

SCELSI: Substantially, you affirm that the transformation of multinationals into contemporary corporations has produced a material base of actors and social subjects able to project the entire capitalist world toward a consciousness and a vision of global character. But in this perspective, returning to Lenin, it's as if intercapitalist competition is made secondary. Is Davos therefore really to be understood as a place of capitalist consciousness in which it overcomes and reflects itself?

NEGRI: Competition no longer appears either as a fundamental economic field or as the terrain on which forms of sovereignty are exposed to global reactions. It's true, competition has already extended to the entire world, but it is also limited to specific sectors that are more and more conditioned by innovation and research capacities. Competition, when it works, happens within the cages of an economic, political, and financial power that remains unitary. It is able to control the phenomena of competition through the elimination of the ability to create extreme contradictions, as would occur in the case of intracapitalist war.

If the Leninist conception of imperialism and of intercapitalist contradictions was pertinent in his time, today it appears to be completely superannuated. It is still possible, of course, to talk about (and to verify) intercapitalist contradictions, but they are secondary in the pyramid of the construction of global power. If anything, these contradictions can be found in different dimensions, namely, between capitalists and multinationals, and through the attempts at national and/or global control, within

which some fractions of capitalism try to be protected and to develop. For example, let's take what is now going on in Europe around bank forays through the form of the public offer of acquisition (Offerta pubblica di acquisto or OPA) and through relations put in motion by national political classes. There is even some idiot who compares this type of contradiction and those that led [Raymond] Poincaré to invade the Ruhr in 1923. How is this possible?

It seems worth noting, in my opinion, that these financial and entrepreneurial events could have different results. For example, what could be the frame of Davos in the future? It has already been seen during negotiations related to the reorganization of global trade: the big Brazilian or Argentinean food industry will go looking for new alliances in order to have more weight in the global order. The structure of Davos, therefore, will no longer be that in which the existent powers try to organize themselves, recognizing themselves as such, but Davos will probably be the terrain on which problems of extension and importance linked to new productive inflows in the global network will begin to be expressed. The big Indian services producers, Brazilian food, Chinese manufacture, etc., will try to have larger spaces of expression in Davos, but this will not, however, change the ensemble of the capitalist structure.

Why? Because capitalist organizations are modeled, only and always, after struggles. And those of Davos know that today the fight with multitudinous global forces is still an open issue, a very serious one from the social point of view. The society in which we live isn't pacified at all. Those in Davos know that they are strongly contested both as individuals and as a totality of forces. Today globalization is not in danger, but it is rearticulating on a

spatial basis. The big continental powers, after they stopped the US attempt to take unilateral command on the development of globalization, will appear at Davos and will pose their conditions to the Americans, opening unprecedented contradictions. On the other hand, they have already started to do this.

Of course, a big front of the Latin American Center-Left will appear for which the very consistent investment of capital for the resolution of social problems is becoming a more and more urgent priority. The same is more or less the case for South Africa as well. Besides this, we have two big powers like China and India with their need to obtain recognition on the level of the production of services, metallurgical production, and mechanical activities. Within empire, the tendency is therefore toward the formation of continental and subcontinental potentates. The CIA gives a pejorative reading of this, calling them "caliphates," but what is certain is that all of them are very annoyed by the disastrous effects of the second Bush mandate—not to speak of the catastrophic refluxes on the US itself. The defeated army is itself destabilized by inefficiencies and moral scandals, and the dollar doesn't resist the rise of the euro and the pressure of internal and external debt. We are at the point that the imperial hegemonic force can't rebuild New Orleans. These are phenomena that touch in very negative terms not only the image, but also and above all the reality of the USA. In Davos this will certainly be discussed, and the problem of how to help the US will certainly be posed—but with the cynicism typical of mercantile societies in posing similar problems. It will be asked how the US could avoid declaring itself the boss of the markets on the one hand, and yet enter the game of the "communism of capital" on the other.

SCELSI: Do the guests continue to change at Davos, or are there

fixed people who participate in all meetings? Has this annual encounter really enabled a leap of the consciences of capital as a whole?

NEGRI: I think that in the course of history, from Renaissance gardens to the salons of the Enlightenment to the editing of newspapers today, the way of commanding capitalism is always the same. The culture itself of capitalism and of the bourgeoisie is structurally shaped by individualism driven by groups and personalities that are organized in a different manner and thus have the capacity to promote discourses and hegemonic activities. Davos is the encounter of a totality of mental habits and mechanisms that conform of course to a postmodern style but that maintain the presumption of the exercise of power.

The difficulty of Davos, like all bourgeois structures, is that it can't predetermine the adversary; sometimes, it doesn't even manage to discover it. More or less one year ago I was asked to intervene in Davos with a document. I sent it, saying in substance: "You are an aristocracy that has consciousness of your own interests. We are in a period of transition; the Americans want to launch a unilateral coup d'état on the global market that you have in reality already fought off because it is in your interest to move on an open, not closed, terrain of the general advancement of capitalist interest. So open up to alternative globalization against the Americans! It certainly won't be a convergence that will go on for long, but at the moment we have to recognize that we have the common necessity of making the American project fail."

SCELSI: Can this idea of Davos as an intelligent, stateless capital be seen as the result of the process of production of money by means of money, of the driven process of financialization in

which industrial capital is substituted by financial capital, and in which entrepreneurial groups don't need to reason in national terms anymore? Is this, then, the other face of financialization?

NEGRI: I believe it is exactly like this. Moreover, these capitalists seem to me to be desperate enough and very disoriented when they realize that the measure of wealth is no longer that which was linked to the classic law of value and to industrial development, but that it is a process that is more and more related to the control of populations and societies, to mechanisms of biopower. A further element of uncertainty: it's a capital conscious of living in a phase of transition and of no longer having strong institutions to which to refer. It is sufficient to look at what's happening these days to the WTO where, even if it has been possible to break the alliance between poor and very poor countries, the functionaries of capital couldn't obtain those "iron agreements" on which they were betting. We are in the presence of a profound crisis of the WTO, of the UN, the World Bank, whereas the only transnational organization that is in a positive stage is the IMF, which has been paradoxically revived not by its own strength but by the recognition that it has recently received from the Argentineans and Brazilians. We aren't being ironic: the conflict has reached such a point of contradiction that only irony can describe it.

What is in crisis, therefore, is the old structure of capitalist transnationalization, while a global organization has not yet arisen. We are facing a fundamental transition from transnationality to globality, and Davos appears disconcerted on this terrain, uncertain on criteria of measure, times of development, and in the third place—the worry of all capitalists—on the form itself of the mode of production. The General Intellect and new biopolitical forms of struggle are looming over Davos.

Today we would need Shakespeare in order to represent Davos: Macbethian feasts over which nightmares loom and where witches scream . . .

SCELSI: Let's go back to this phase of transition and to the crisis of international institutions. I think that there are problems of a general character that concern governance and rules, as also emerged from the financial market (from Enron to Parmalat). It seems to me that to think of rules in a dimension of global transitoriness, or of the attempt to introduce them without stable and strong governance, is very hard. What do you think?

NEGRI: Governance today no longer operates on simply or exclusively capitalist terms. Especially on the global level, there is the possibility of contesting and transforming some administrative rules, which are reduced to procedures within governance, with respect to complexity and to the determination of problems that capital would like to regulate. Governance enables us to overthrow (especially in the presence of struggles) the rigidity of the system into flexible dynamics: a multilevel structure of power that calculates that every function of government has to confront continuously the resistance of the multitude.

In this phase of transition, governance is becoming more and more a place and space of recognition of the adversary, of the rupture, and of the duplicity there is on every administrative terrain. It is more and more an area of recognition of the movements and, therefore, the impossibility of reducing the negotiation of social relations to a unitary central management. Governance has already definitively become an open institution. Like "governmentality" in Foucault: he defines what we term governance with this concept, and he does it first of all by defining procedures of sov-

ereign biopowers and the genealogy of their constitution. But as long as development of social control is realized, biopolitical impulses antagonistic to biopower are discovered within governmentality; they rise from social antagonisms and from the production of the subjectivity that they determine. Biopolitical power [potenza] is therefore contrasted to biopower: this is the great intuition that, at least in the last Foucault, is proposed to us in order to read the antagonistic subjectivity at the origin of the postmodern figure of class conflict.

Going back to the governance issue and its material genesis, it is necessary to understand what making the mechanism of financialization work in the function of social production means. Like governance, the government of financialization is open to a series of antagonisms the solution of which is not so much strictly economic as political. I mean that financialization is subjected to a set of mechanisms (payment of debt, internal and external relations of the budget of every national unity, big organizations of ratings) that are interesting but aleatory. For example, it's difficult to understand why the USA, which doesn't obey any of the fundamental criteria of financial correctness, is considered central in the global system rather than as shameful schoolchildren or marginal robbers, as instead is shown by the merciless data of financial reports. Why?

I don't think we are revealing esoteric secrets when we recall that the political problem is central here as well. The USA is able to exert hegemony despite the crisis of its monetary and industrial projects; despite the crisis, they are able to express the capacity of ruling on the terrain of financial institutions and the capacity of attracting capital. Paradoxically, this strength is based, therefore, more than on the capacity of producing, on the capac-

ity of destroying every social and productive reference of wealth—this is what makes it politically hegemonic. Financialization and its government are not the destruction of the social relation of exploitation, but its obfuscation or the neutralization of its social effects. For that reason any social event (like a struggle over transportation in New York or the renewal of revolts in the ghettos) is not only difficult to control, but it could become a motivating factor of political crisis for American capital.

We have to be able to understand how much the aleatoriness of the general system corresponds to the precarity of the power relations; it's not true that there exist large, fixed, and rigid power relations. The interregnum in which we live can be resolved in one sense or another. The case of the interregnum between the first Puritan revolution and the Orangist victory can be taken as an example. From an historical point of view, it's not certain that the winning transition had to be what happened, from the Ancien Régime to the liberal reform. Many other things could have happened: Cromwell's victory or even the victory of the Far-Left Levellers . . .

SCELSI: You see the English crisis in Davos?

NEGRI: Davos is more and more similar to William of Orange. This is paradoxical because William first tried to repress in Holland the liberal revolution that anticipated fully what happened later in England. Once he was crowned in Great Britain, however, he became its prime interpreter.

SCELSI: Maybe because the crown was more precious!

NEGRI: It was the British Empire, the construction of a new bourgeois Magna Carta in order to make capitalists agree with

each other—always under the nightmare of the pressure of a revolution of the multitude. The multitude behaves in a different way compared to the revolutionary proletariat that has as its objective the taking of power. The multitude is a swarm; it is a subject made by intelligent singularities that need power not in order to exercise it in a solitary way but in order to produce. This is the mess: the subaltern classes are already classes with a fixed capital richer than that of the bosses, a spiritual patrimony more important than what the others boast, and an absolute weapon: the knowledge essential for the reproduction of the world.

SCELSI: Let's conclude the discourse about the difficulty of writing a new Magna Carta that would be needed today for the bosses but also in order to attain different balances, in order to stabilize the interregnum, and affirm rights—although in a reformist sense—for the multitude. It seems to me that it isn't possible to arrive at this . . .

NEGRI: Magna Carta can also be imposed. The democratic method is not always necessary; we are not determinists in this at all. Multitude today presents itself as a third subject (alongside American monarchy and transnational aristocracies). It is a very strange subject, with a nonexistent class consciousness (if we refer to the traditional definition). However, it has the capacity to put itself in the network and to recompose projects in multitudinous ways, to show its own power and to produce, within struggles, new occasions of political and social proposals. It is impossible to hit the multitude, for example, by lowering wages and oppressing it as a whole because the multitude is never united. But working on its divisions doesn't work either because somehow the multitudinous swarm is always united. How is it

possible is to govern the multitude? I try to work on this Machiavellian question in order to understand how the multitude can rebel.

SCELSI: The polycentrism of multitude therefore appears to mirror that of capital . . .

NEGRI: I think that it is the contrary, that the polycentrism of capital now rides on the coattails of the polycentrism of the multitude. The Magna Carta that should be written today should say this. It is no longer an agreement between kings and barons, between capital and trade unions.

In order to construct the Magna Carta of today, we therefore need to construct interlocutors, as many interlocutors as possible.

SCELSI: Don't you think that not only are we going through a phase in which the interlocutor of tomorrow is not being constructed, but also that the interlocutor of the past no longer has the legitimacy to speak, and that among the possible scenarios there could be such a generalized destruction of social guarantees that it could lead to a Dickensian situation? To a modernity characterized by diffuse, immense poverty, by megalopolies composed by plebeians who live in incredible situations . . . ?

NEGRI: I don't believe very much in the repetition of these scenarios of misery. Somebody blames me for a certain trust in the development of productive forces, but this trust arises from the consideration that these productive forces are no longer those defined by Marx. I refer to the workerist ascendancy: productive forces have been gathered around the singular resistance of the workers' mass, around new regimes of needs that have slowly determined themselves and that become more and more impor-

tant for the definition of capitalist development. A general repressive capacity of capital doesn't exist.

SCELSI: And the attack on the pensions?

NEGRI: It hasn't been realized yet. In order to agree with you I would first need to see old people in the street . . . While now I see only the multiplication of caregivers . . . Anyway, it's true that the attack on pensions also means that what it costs families to take care of their old people has increased. This attack has been hard, but on the one hand, it has touched old privileges, while on the other, it has been used to put into circulation saved capital, immobilized to such an extent that it could hardly bear fruit. Certainly, I don't want to undervalue the danger, but I don't make the danger a monster! Measures of the growth of welfare are still enormous, even if it is evident that there are people who don't reach the end of the month. Just as there are repetitive attempts to build ghettos, to push strata of the population to the margin of system.

But there isn't anymore an "outside" to the capitalist system, and therefore ghettos and peripheries are "within" as well. From a political point of view, noting this seems to me to be extremely important. A periphery that revolts immediately attacks the center of power. Secondly, a periphery that revolts produces a crisis of all social shapes, not only of those of the periphery. This internality of the periphery, both at an urban level and on the global dimension, is an unavoidable internality for capital. It runs through all the countries in a determinant way and imposes a requalification of all the power relations for the simple reason that we are by now in a global dynamic made of infrastructures, interdependencies, and conflicts. In the case of the Parisian *banlieues* of autumn

2005, for example, we are in the presence of suffering determined by the transition from the Fordist system to what comes afterward. Those who didn't find a job were relegated to the peripheries where these "compensation camps" were built. These are always situations of struggle, within which potentialities of revolt are accumulated, including tensions of struggle against the new regime of diffused precarity, as later happened in the struggle against CPE.* It is therefore a matter of potentialities that attack immediately the center of power. Regarding the peripheries, as a communist I can't avoid considering them as structural elements of rupture of every system of power. The same is and will be the case for the precariat. Furthermore, policemen as well read these struggles in the same terms. It is a double phenomenon because we are talking about people in exodus who are building in the ghettos, or in precarity, the hope of a future world.

*Mutatis mutandis*** for the Susa Valley, an area strongly linked to Turin. I remember that we used to go there during the seventies to leaflet, just like we used to in front of Fiat, so much so that the Susa Valley was internal to the Fordist city. That was a phenomenon of exodus, people saying, "We want a different life, a life that is possible." In the Parisian peripheries there is the same thing, as well as in the struggles against precarity.

SCELSI: Going back to the question of the megalopolies, African and Asian this time: are we maybe in the presence of phenomena attractive for plebeians and the multitudes, also in relation to the spoiling of traditional rural cultures (as the case of Jakarta testi-

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* The Contrat Première Embauche (First Employment Contract) led to a general strike in France.

** Change having come.

fies, with reference to the Indonesian agriculture development)? For the first time, after much time, we have a transformation of the vision of the city.

NEGRI: More than two-thirds of the global population lives in metropolitan units with more than a million people. This fact changes everything. Here there is a relation between massification, velocity of transformation, and new temporalities that becomes fundamental. Massification is no longer a statistical fact but an enormous productive one: this is for me the figure of the escape from the ghetto and from class society. A polemic that I am involved in at the moment, for example, is that against those who think that it is impossible to understand capitalist valorization outside the firm, and therefore, they say that everything that is outside the company is externality (communications, transportation, schools, ways of life) with respect to the flow of entrepreneurial production of the central capitalist unit. It's not true! The metropolis is not only not external, it's the true subject of production. It's a complex reality, active, not in an organic sense, with divisions inside it, but all of which are functional to the project. It's no longer an element of externality, margin, concentration camp . . . The metropolis is productive.

SCELSI: About multitudes, plebeians, and subjects you say Exodus, but in the current form there isn't political leadership, to use old categories . . . Where is the multitude, then? In a prepolitical form or beyond politics? Are we maybe faced by a theoretical impasse?

NEGRI: We should avoid confusing theoretical impasse with practical impasse. I believe that in this case the practical impasse is easier to resolve. I see a continuous process that multiplies the

instances of the multitude. For example, on governance, if we look at what's happening in Latin America, it's possible to see that within a strong acceleration in the production of new political behaviors, relations between movements and governments have been posed on an extraconstitutional terrain of strong intensity. The multitudinous movements, by means of governance as an element of democratic diffusion, were able to distribute government instruments across the whole society, and society uses them. It's not only in Latin America that this happens. Take as an additional example the capacity of Chinese proletarian groups to intervene on key issues of the capitalist development of the country. These are pressures of enormous intensity that are realized in a totally unprecedented way and that see the party fail in its attempt to exercise dictatorship on masses and to be itself reduced to an instrument of governance. And this is not for reasons connected to formally democratic transformation but effectual, purely effectual, because if it isn't done in this way the system doesn't work. That has even been understood by the rough heads of the Chinese communist hierarchy. All of this happens because the cognitariat has become the fundamental productive force that makes the system work. It's evident that here we are beyond a direct and specific description of the organization of labor. We are, on the contrary, on the terrain of tendency. Now hegemony, within the great historical transformation that we are going through, is that of the cognitariat, of cognitive labor, which preconstitutes a wealth that capital won't ever be able to produce: freedom.

Freedom is productive, freedom is the fixed capital that is inside the brain of the people. It is this man or woman free to imagine, to communicate, to develop language, that interests us

here. Only freedom creates value.

Cognitive labor is imagination plus freedom plus cooperation, and this labor is posited outside the time measurable by the boss because it dominates time and is not dominated by it. Cognitive labor is an event, a *kairós*, an invention of time, and therefore it's not possible to measure it; because it is a nonmeasurable labor, it anchors itself in freedom.

I certainly don't mean that when you do immaterial labor you are not subjected to certain rules; on the contrary, sometimes forms of Taylorization of intellectual labor are present, and they are even heavier than those in the factory. But this doesn't mean much. It's well known, in fact, that the work of the mass worker can sometimes be reduced to slave work; on the other hand, there are cases of Chinese and Eastern workers who escaped from their countries and who work in the factories of the thirteenth arrondissement in Paris (the French Chinatown)—but we could talk about thousands of other similar places of slave exploitation, places where conditions are worse than under Soviet Stakhanovism. These are partial elements compared to the great emancipatory tendency of cognitive labor: it wins because it emanates freedom. There is someone who says, maybe rightly, that the Soviet Union fell because it didn't give workers the freedom they desired—not due to a lack of investments but to the rigidity of the bureaucratic system. Now, labor couldn't be emancipated from the material to the immaterial level without freedom, and the socialist command fell because of this.

Here rights linked to freedom and not individual rights are at stake, because today labor isn't of individuals anymore but of multitudes, it is always plural work. It's funny to notice it—all of this is very Spinozist! There are networks of atoms and singularities

constructing wealth, there aren't souls or organs or preconstituted masses.

The last thing that it is important to highlight here is that the concept of the collective is also being exhausted. Here there is now the common, something that is further back, and at the same time more advanced, than the collective. After all, we used to interpret the collective in an individualistic way: it is an accumulation of individuals, and in the last analysis it corresponds to the bourgeois concept of the public, defined by a very strong philosophical and juridical tradition, namely, Kantian transcendentalism. On the contrary, the multitude doesn't have direct political expression, but it uses trade unionism, as well as other public or democratic collective structures in order to organize itself, in order to leave the corner in which the proletariat is blocked. Now, what is important is to discover the common—that is, here, in our case, in the middle of our discussion—and to start bringing the discourse on multitude back toward the common and to make the relation of singularities reside in the common.

I was speaking with some friends in Paris about the fact that we undervalued the Fordist dimension of the Parisian struggles of 1995–96 [see chapter 2]. We have often referred to these struggles as the dawn of the struggles over the common. However, it is without doubt that the ignition key of the events of that winter was corporative. But, at the same time, new affectivities emerged, new human relations, and above all, new metropolitan relations. Comrades with whom I discussed this some time ago said, "We maybe exaggerated in describing these struggles as the beginning of a new epoch, because if it is true that in that phase we experimented with the metropolitan excess in the common action of struggle, we haven't been able to find the ignition of that process

anymore, and when we found it, it was closed inside a corporative figure. This is the trouble that has been one element of our impotence." But, now, what does it mean to imagine an organization of the common? I can try to give a first indication here and to come back to it soon: the Parisian struggles of 2005–6, those of the students and *banlieusards* against the CPE of [Dominique de] Villepin . . .

SCELSI: In order for cognitive work plus cooperation to realize itself and become an emancipatory phenomenon and not only imagination, it needs a concrete form of capital in order to transform its force into something else. This is the reason very good workers from an intellectual point of view are forced to work under a boss—they don't have the capacity to put their intuitions to work, except in very rare cases.

NEGRI: This is the problem of May Day: how is it possible to put together field-workers of information capital and sharecroppers of cognitive capital? Field-workers and sharecroppers were within a very coherent capitalist model of organization of labor and production of commodities in the proto-industrial world, because there was a relation with the time of labor and the property of homogenous means of production. But where is there an organic model of the measure of labor today? What does unity of cognitive labor mean? It's certainly impossible to divide it into time units, as was the case for the old abstract Taylorized work. What is, therefore, the new model for bringing the field-worker and the sharecropper of cognitive labor together?

First of all, we should consider not only similarities, but also diversities: there is the effort of cognitive labor, and the person who works is always the person that works hard and produces

surplus value. Therefore we have to analyze cognitive capital for what it is—a capital that uses free labor, labor that can't be closed in a measured and measurable temporality. Better, the valorization of this labor doesn't consist in the exploitation of the time that it implies but in the exploitation of the time that cognitive labor innovates. This innovated and innovative time is the time of cooperation and of the construction of productive languages. Now, if labor has always been a source of innovation, if work is the human activity par excellence, how is it possible to separate work from that condition that cognitive work determines, how is it possible, in other words, to separate labor of activity from people's lives? The current problem of political economy is to consider human beings when they live and not only when they work, as human beings are always producers. Always, that is, in any moment of life. How is the exploitation of life thinkable? It is not. The only problem that we will pose to ourselves will be to understand how the field-workers and sharecroppers of cognitive labor will be able to blow the bosses away, because the industrial command of cognitive labor is completely *dépassé*. This is the theme of May Day, which is not simply a moment of struggle against precarity, but a first appointment of the new cognitive labor power against the capitalist enterprise of exploitation.

SCELSI: Often cognitive labor is bridled in a Fordist context that shapes the labor itself. There is a permanence of forms, which is the control of the body and brains. On brains maybe they are not able to do it, but on the bodies they are, as [Friedrich] Nietzsche says. And it's hard to disengage from this dynamic because we lack the capital to invest.

NEGRI: There is the lack of political capacity to develop this

power and to put capital under juridical control. The social revolutionary transition today consists in this. There is the need to make capital aware of the weight and importance of the common good, and if it doesn't want to understand it, it is necessary to impose it. The difference between common work and public structure of work lies in the fact that all of us act in common work, while the public structure is capital put at the disposition of the State. The common is not an anarchical thing. All of us want order, but that is based on those necessities of common life that could translate into elements of increasing freedom, common more than public. When I say "public" it unfortunately means that we only change who dominates us. Common, instead, is something radically different: it is the democracy that is set over capitalist command and makes another order of society—that of the multitude that works with the brain.

12. CHINA IS NEAR!

SCELSI: The novelty of the Chinese subcontinent lies in the fact that the direction chosen by the country after the experience of the Gang of Four was concentrated on the so-called four modernizations, a capitalist development managed by a nominally communist party. In the Cultural Revolution, now forty years in the past, some categories and realities were discussed, such as the concept of power and industrialist logics of accumulation. What can we say today of the neocapitalist Chinese experience?

NEGRI: I have never had anything to do with Philo-Chinese [Maoists]. On the contrary, when I was young I combated them very strongly, although, despite my profound skepticism for the theme of the countryside and the primitive accumulation that the Chinese sustained around the world, I thought that they represented an enormous revolutionary force and that, at the same time, the theoretical level was secondary compared to the concrete datum of their experience. In my interpretation of Marxism, I have always tried to keep the theoretical element separate from the political aspect. I obliged my friends of the journal *Classe Operaia*, who were terribly critical of the Chinese, to visit the Chinese embassy in Bern. I took [Romano] Alquati and [Alberto] Asor Rosa, and it was an almost comic experience when representatives of the embassy exalted, in front of the frenzied industrialists of *Classe Operaia*, the extraordinary actions and common experiences of repeated primitive accumulation beginning with basis of

the Chinese peasant (it was the midsixties). Alquati and Asor Rosa were completely astonished, whereas I assumed a more open attitude, even if I considered them to be mad. When the end of the experience of the Gang of Four arrived, I agreed with decisions assumed by the direction of the Chinese Communist Party: Mao was completely wrong in the final years of his life, allowing the interference of his wife, of the court of followers . . . But there was something very powerful in what happened: those lunatics thought that another world was possible, and they tried to verify it by repeating the processes of primitive accumulation! After all, this was the content of the Cultural Revolution. The point was to start again from the base in order to build another road to modernity and wealth. It was a crazy experience that also contained a great wisdom, namely, that a different development was possible and that capitalism was, more than disgusting in itself, unnecessary. In short, they affirmed the possibility of constructing an alternate modernity.

In itself it is not stupid—let's think of Spinoza or Machiavelli and of many other theories of development, antimodern because antiabsolutist and therefore, anticapitalist. They also wanted an alternate modernity, a modernity that was not linked to reasons of the private, of individualism, or of liberal constitutionalism.

Let's think of what happened in Latin America. Here there is a deep opposition to capitalism, which has lasted for centuries, from the moment of the conquest. Evo Morales has recently won the Bolivian elections, an event that has enormous symbolic importance after centuries of resistance. In modern Western history in Latin America, in the colonized countries, there has always been the idea of another possible modernity, of another possible development against Stalinism. Mao profoundly understood this.

Stalinism was at a certain moment—because of a series of constrictions, the war, and the difficulty of constructing socialism in one country—an apology for developed capitalism. The problem is to be able to understand how and why Mao built up a machine for real revolution. The Cultural Revolution was everything but a generic movement; it eradicated elites and disrupted museums and academies with a violence that is unimaginable for us, all on the theoretical hypothesis that another modernity could be possible. Another modernity that Mao individuated in another mode of primitive accumulation.

SCELSI: Mao gave a premodern answer to the problem of modernity.

NEGRI: There is something strange in that country; when you visit it you feel dizzy. If I were an imperialist I would have tried to divide it. I don't understand why they wanted to keep it united; in its unitary structure it has enormous power. When Mao died and at the beginning of the trial of the Gang of Four, from 1976 onward until 1989, an extremely important debate opened up about which modernity it would be better to embrace. There was unanimity in the critique of the Cultural Revolution, but there was still the question: "Is another modernity possible?" And this question ran through that phase. In 1989, the Chinese Communist Party decided that another modernity was not possible, that the only possible modernity was the capitalist one, thus missing, in my opinion, in that moment, with that political decision, the train of informational and cognitive labor.

SCELSI: They saw it as something for elites that couldn't feed a billion people.

NEGRI: Probably, but it was at that point that there was the social fight, which degenerated to the military level. This is Tiananmen: the fight between the Chinese Communist Party, which chose the classic American capitalist path, against the students and above all the proletariat of Peking that supported the students.

SCELSI: But the mobilization of students happened by putting up the Statue of Liberty and the American flag. Is that maybe irrelevant?

NEGRI: Completely. In the mythology, communication, and debates in China those symbols are absolutely irrelevant. For the people that talk to you about thousands of deaths, of hundreds of thousands of interned, American symbolism is absolutely secondary.

SCELSI: There is a problem with the repression in Tiananmen. Economical development is put in charge of society, whereas the central authority reaffirms decisional power as its own. While [Jean-Paul] Fitoussi and other macroeconomists affirm, a bit trustily, that development of a country should go together with democratization of society, what happened in China demonstrated that development and democracy don't necessarily go together.

NEGRI: I agree. I would have thought that it was stupid to pose the problem of democracy in front of that crisis, that level of development. But today there is the problem of democracy, in as much as a cognitive component becomes essential for its development and its expansion. This is the problem today in China: how to control the diffused intelligence in the metropolis? How to control the biopolitical dimensions of development as a whole?

It has to be noticed how strong Western propaganda against China is and, at the same time, how contradictory: exaltation of the economical results of China and attack against the Chinese Communist Party, against its ideological and bureaucratic structure. On this wavelength, there is a lot of attention for citizen revolts, while there is absolute silence on proletarian or students revolts, which are occurring once again in China.

In China there is a situation that is revolutionary in many senses, but it could be blocked and directed in a different manner if the political elite of the country would assume a different relation. At the moment in China, social development could be compared to our 1968: it's with that tonality and strength that the question of the relation between modernization and the development of freedom is being posed, between demands to meet needs and anxiety of the common.

In 2008 the Olympics will be held and with it the debate within the Chinese Communist Party, which we have hinted at until now, will be concluded. It has to be remembered that the Chinese Communist Party is something serious; it is capable of developing a quite transparent central debate, and thanks to it, it can distribute themes of discussion around the country. The Chinese say that the party is the ensemble of two overlapping figures, an octopus and a rhizome. The Chinese Communist Party has been able to configure itself with a plan of continuity, subjective and objective. One day they will have to revolutionize the party and the country, but on that day it won't be possible to forget the history of radicalism of the Chinese Communist Party. In the debates I happened to have in China there was always someone who said to me, regarding the freedom of criticism in the Chinese Communist Party: "There isn't anybody here who

doesn't have a protector." It is not, this declaration I mean, a confession of Confucian Caesarism or petty mafioso opportunism; rather, it is an element integral to Chinese culture in which relations, even family relations, have to be recognized and objectivized. "If I speak, I am doing so also in the name of other people who are in contact with me." This is the point of view of my Chinese comrades!

It seems to me that in China this relation between very advanced development and extreme suffering, this relation between three hundred million people who are within development and the other billion who remain outside will pose the problem of the revival of a national communism—extremely radical. At this point I have no idea what could happen.

SCELSI: You were talking about prerevolutionary or quasi-revolutionary experience. How can a system that chose in the past a path of forced industrialization on capitalist levels turn back toward different models?

NEGRI: In my opinion, the problem is another one. The Chinese Communist Party will propose again the theme of the satisfaction of proletarian needs as the center of the debate. After all, they have already started to do it—it is easy to be prophetic about this! It is a crucial passage for determining consensus and the recomposition of internal tensions. Despite everything, the Chinese Communist Party is little corrupted, compared to the administrative machine and society itself. But the Chinese Communist Party is something else. What I say here is an assertion without proof; it is confirmed only by a long series of narratives and encounters I've had in China.

What is sure is that it is a different country, where capitalism

didn't develop at the beginning of the modern epoch, and very likely, it will never be affirmed, despite the violence of the impact.

SCELSI: But labor power is still subjected to a very hard factory regime, according to what we are told.

NEGRI: I have the sensation that in 2008 this phase will be closed in order to relaunch the general construction of society and to recover consensus from the rural masses for the revolutionary transformation of property regimes.

SCELSI: But they expropriate lands . . .

NEGRI: Yes, they are really doing it, they are swallowing down privatizations, and the only hope of resistance that we have is that they will get a stomachache . . . But in my opinion one day or another they will be forced to redistribute wealth.

SCELSI: What did you mean by "national communism"?

NEGRI: I think that in the definition of balances and antagonist tensions that characterize the current situation, we still lack an internationalist push. On the contrary, it has always been present in the old Chinese Communist Party, but at this moment it appears completely inexistent. Even if we are faced with a revival of communism, we'll nevertheless have a new first "encounter" without prophetic or hegemonic drives at the international level. When we say "encounter," we are talking about that hard but true march toward the cosmopolitan recomposition of the revolutionary project. We have to be agitators of this opportunity of cultural and political unification.

SCELSI: How to unify such a large population, with such different languages . . . ?

NEGRI: Yes, but all of them understand the written language.

SCELSI: Your book *Empire* has been translated into Chinese.

NEGRI: Twice, in Pekinese and in simplified language.

SCELSI: What impression did you have when you presented it?

NEGRI: I received an honorary doctorate. In general, these are things that I refuse, but this time they were able to fool me. First, they kept me in a room full of journalists until the last moment, then I found myself on a stage with flowers and important personalities I didn't know, who bowed and who started speaking Chinese, and without a translation, I found an envelope in my hands. Michael Hardt, who was with me, said to them that I would have never accepted an honorary doctorate . . .

SCELSI: What did they find interesting in *Empire*?

NEGRI: There were incredible linguistic debates, because saying "empire" in China is like saying "China." An article published by the French journal *Multitudes* explains the difficulties of saying in Chinese words like "empire" and "multitude." An incredible effort, just like, for other reasons, in the Arabic countries, where "multitude" and "umma" risk overlapping. Sometimes I think that the great importance of *Empire*, more than what it recounts, consists in the fact that it posed these conceptual and terminological problems. On the other hand, this is the work of a philosopher.

SCELSI: And regarding *Empire*?

NEGRI: The concepts have been translated eliptically, but it seems that they understand them. It is like someone who doesn't

know the language and makes analogies with concepts they have and in this way tries to understand. The ambiguities are in reality very limited.

SCELSI: Contrary to what it is usually affirmed in many books on the miracle of the Chinese colossus, you traced the internal debate and affirmed that a new phase, a break, will open after 2008.

NEGRI: There will be a break, and there will be an internal distribution of the accumulated wealth. Probably late but, with the efficacy of a completely planned system, the party will pose inside Chinese governance all the problems of the political economy of Western capitalist societies—rise of consumption, recovery of internal consumptions—even if it doesn't at all mean the revival of nationalist closure, neither autarchy nor the revival of Chinese neoliberalism. In fact, neoliberalism as such has arrived at a point of crisis, owing not only to the economic disequilibria that it creates, but also to the unilateral American political management of neoliberalism. It's a crisis that determines conditions that capitalism can't manage any longer. We are at the point of a cyclic specific phase that started with Thatcher and [Ronald] Reagan, against which everything now declares war.

Every time I imagine describing the second part of the twentieth century, I think of saying that the phases of neoliberal control of economic development are in reality extremely limited. Paradoxically, they show exactly the contrary of what they would like to demonstrate, that is, liberalism is opposed by the necessity for economics to be biopoliticized, politically organized, and only, for this reason, legitimated. Someone said to me many years ago, "The economy is too important to be left to economists." And when problems of management become fundamental, for all the

economies and not only for the socialist-planned ones, that affirmation is even truer. Maybe we are at the margin of a new cycle of the central control of economies—surely more public and, we hope, more common. Liberal adventurers, anyway, are less and less accepted.

13. IRAN: BUT WASN'T GOD DEAD?

SCELSI: Nineteen seventy-nine, the Khomeinian Revolution. Surprisingly, the Shah falls, bulwark of the Atlantic alliance in the Middle East. Against expectations, the revolution doesn't assume the classical connotations of the Marxist revolution but those of "an uncommon alliance of the masses" between popular classes and the Shiite clerics. In reality, regarding its real weight, it was a neglected event, above all in the West. It is only today that we begin to hear its profound echo. What is there to say about this revolution, which seems to me to be one of the great geopolitical events of the postwar period?

NEGRI: Iran, in an unstable geopolitical zone, defined an epochal revolution. The great struggles that developed for a certain historical period regarding Iran, among Russia and England and the Western world, finish; a new actor appears. Together with Turkey, Iran was considered for a long time the strategic element of the entire Middle East—two countries in which Islamism had assumed specific forms, Ataturk and Shiitism. In the Arab–Middle Eastern block, the only drive of secularism historically was represented by the Palestinian emigration, which has also represented the only working class of the area. On the other hand, as different powers, there is Turkey and Iran.

The Americans have done everything to get their hands on Iran, which instead resisted and drove out the Shah, using [Ruhollah] Khomeini in order to achieve their independence. It is

difficult for us to imagine this type of country, with a political production that is able to generate two results: on the one hand, the international independence of the country, on the other hand, a strong autonomy of the society with respect to the State. In the Middle East, there are these two simultaneous tendencies only where there is Shiitism, which certainly isn't a totalitarian ideology. In Iran there is strong national cohesion and at the same time a demand for liberty by groups and individuals, which is just as extraordinary. For example, they say, "We are for a secular and real democracy, but if the Israelis attack our country, we will all be with the Imams." Profound independence, radical liberty, and political delegation to the Shiite hierarchy. In its turn, this hierarchy pays its debts to society, developing, on the one hand, a role of connection with the global multinationals, defending in this way the country from unilateral American attack (which considers Iran to be a "rogue state," however, Iran itself with its passionate anti-Zionism does everything to fall within this category); on the other hand, the income of oil production, controlled by the Shiite hierarchy, is turned over to missions of assistance in favor of the Iranian proletariat.

Good or bad, the people accept this situation. It can count on a functioning welfare system in a situation that in many respects is similar to that of Venezuela. It has a political class more or less militarized and fanatical but that nevertheless lavishes manna on the popular classes: hospitals, when they exist, function, and there are also schools and assistance to families.

Furthermore, we need to be clear on another matter: that of totalitarianism. The Iranian situation is anything but totalitarian. On the other hand, as we already said, the very category of totalitarianism appears to be blunted, and to speak of totalitarianism

when faced with highly industrialized situations is nonsense. The so-called Asiatic mode of production finished millennia ago, and industrialism and totalitarianism can't exist together because the population can't be put to work in the manner of slaves anymore. To come back to Iran, there is an incredible liberty of the lower middle social classes (students, women), even though there is a sort of religious monopoly of society by the Imams.

SCELSI: But very recently they abolished rock music "by decree" . . .

NEGRI: They can abolish whatever they want, this only means that rock music circulates in a clandestine and diffuse fashion in society, and it will continue in this way. In Iran we are faced by such phenomena of mass emancipation that control is rendered practically impossible. Even in theocratic Iran the instruments of control are in themselves risible, like the fascist militia in Italy that wasn't able to do anything to regiment the evolution of habits. Iran is a country traversed by a huge process of modernization that sees its primary protagonists in the young. There is in Iran, proportionally, the largest number of blogs and Web sites in the world; they are in Farsi and are even more numerous than Indian sites . . . They also say that there isn't a girl who leaves college still a virgin, a strange thing for a sexphobic Islamic society. In fact, it's a country of youth without comparison. In the evening, you can find yourself blocked by the *bashir* who check the cars, who check if you smell of wine, and if the woman beside you is really your wife, but nobody cares, and they keep on living how they want to. It's a country much more civilized than its regime but be careful—don't confuse freedom of habits with Americanism. It's not like in Italy after 1945, when we mixed the two things and

understood only later how much this situation was mystified. In Iran, freedom of habits is taken directly, because the people defend their freedom. Analogously, the people take the instruments of communication and manage them, they appropriate cognitive capital, and these are facts of a true liberation of the spirit.

SCELSI: Nineteen seventy-nine was an important act in the geopolitics of the area: it was the first anti-American revolution in the Middle East, on the long wave of Vietnam. Furthermore, the Shiite revolution triggered other political movements of the base: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine (despite the initial financing of Israel), and support to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Even if these are Sunni movements with deep cultural and political roots in Saudi Arabia, they have, however, a radical vision of religion.

NEGRI: I don't know the question well enough. I was in contact with this business in the summer of 1954 when, immediately after the seizure of power by Nasser in Egypt, I frequented Arab socialist circles and those of the Baathist movement in Cairo for around two months. Back then, nobody thought that the Shiites could represent a moment of rupture so profound, even if in Iran the communist movement was strong—it's important not to forget that, just as it is important not to forget the figure of Mossadeq. Remember also that the mediations undertaken by the Shiite movements regarding the communist movements were important. Between Iran and Iraq the mass of poor Shiites were actively traversed by the communist movement. You need to remember that the Shiite movement, though having characteristics of a feudal nature—and maybe precisely because of this—has

a relation with poverty and solidarity that you could interpret as a rapprochement to communism rather than its refusal. Furthermore, communism was a common theme in the debates that the Iranian political elites had developed, even more so seeing that the relation with Russia and then the Soviet Union was always deep. You know how these historical traditions advance in time.

SCELSI: The Iranian Communist Party offered full support to Khomeini's regime immediately after 1979, but after a short time Tudeh was expelled . . .

NEGRI: It's worthwhile remembering the ambiguity of the Iranian situation after the victory of Khomeini. The alliance between Shiites and communists was followed by a struggle for hegemony—and it should be said that Khomeini knew how to use the arms of insurrection and of coup d'état in an absolutely Leninist manner. He withdrew to Qom and attacked from there. If he hadn't done it, the communists would have done it; who won was the one who was more timely, as Machiavelli would say. Now, the party of the Imams was, on the one hand, a party of pure and simple businessmen (negotiations over oil with Italy, with the Russians, and the Americans, as well as dealings with telephone businesses, banking services—this is [Mohammad] Khatami and reformism), but on the side there is an internal development that redistributes income to the population and aims at its cultural advancement. In this, the Khomeinists have recuperated the projects of socialist modernization. Again, if we think only in terms of capitalism and anticapitalism, we risk not understanding anything. Freedom is rarely on the side of the capitalists.

The only way to relate today to the Iranians is maybe to evaluate the attitude of the elite and the population—often in itself

contradictory—inside a situation that is completely changed, inside, that is, a globalization that, while it imposes rhythms of very rapid modernization, exposes the regime to increasingly heavy attacks by the central countries. Probably the only chance at freedom for the Iranian people is that of struggling, together, against the clerical regime and for globalization.

SCELSI: The election of the new president . . .

NEGRI: He was the mayor of Tehran, and everybody said that he was a beast. He exists politically only because the frontal opposition of the Western countries gives him life.

SCELSI: However, he has gained the consent of the Iranian popular classes.

NEGRI: The Iranian popular classes don't exist, there are only multitudes. We need to change the sociological point of view. I don't know if the poorest strata of the metropolitan populations have more or less voted for him; it is certain, however, that the middle classes voted for him, the educated, who constitute the heart of Iranian society. Why did they do it? For the simple reason that they don't want somebody else to explain to them what democracy is, they want to construct it directly. Democracy is reinvented there as desire of the multitudes, otherwise it doesn't exist!

SCELSI: The revolution of 1979 posed in a strong way the relation between religion and politics in Iran and elsewhere.

NEGRI: Although I speak from the point of view of an atheist and an anticapitalist, I respect the existence of the religious phenomenon; in situations of great poverty and misery, religion isn't simply the opium of the people but relief that touches profound

zones of human spirituality. Religion is a big rip-off in itself, but it can also be a great instrument of liberation.

You speak of the centrality of the Iranian 1979 as a unique moment in the experimentation of the strong relation between religion and politics, but the victory of Lula and other communist movements in Latin America (here an entirely different scenario) goes by way of liberation theology. Another type, in the global panorama, is the theocons. Religion is becoming very important from the political point of view. In reality, religious practice is a way of cutting short philosophical reasoning regarding the fundamental problems of humanity (why are we in the world, why do we love, why do we live in society, why do we die), and each religion offers specific responses. However, the responses to these questions have value for us only when they sink into the common, enabling us to be at peace and to build together, and to express the maximum productivity and solidarity possible. When you manage to make the flesh live in the spirit of Saint Paul, and the Shiites do this, the religious proposal demonstrates itself to be constructive. I also imagine communism as something in which religious tensions of this type, not reactionary ones, can be present. It is possible to recuperate religious impulses toward the common inside materialist conditions of common existence. In the materialist philosophy of Spinoza all of this is amply demonstrated. Religion isn't a problem, it's the religiosity that priests preach and the way the bosses use it that become a problem.

SCELSI: What do you mean?

NEGRI: Suffering in order to go to heaven, the eternal structure of the separation between the poor and the rich, the soul as more important that the body, God as the foundation of power, domi-

nation as a spiritual necessity of a world fallen into original sin . . . On the other hand, when religion says that humans are equal, that they have the same flesh, the same desires that have to be placed in common, this seems to me then . . . *un raccourci de la métaphysique,** which can be good for life.

SCELSI: It is undeniable that, beginning in 1979, the parareligious political protagonism of the neocons and also the theocons is acting in such a way that our culture, which is also a secular culture of social and civil living together, withdraws.

NEGRI: Hobbes was an atheist but a monarchist and thus says, "I reinvent god beyond metaphysics in order to guarantee my political theology." God is the basis of totalitarianism—a disgusting thing but this doesn't have anything to do with religion. [Cardinal Camillo] Ruini is to be denounced as politically vulgar . . . but here religion isn't at play so much as its political use is. The materiality of life, the freedom of passion will not be able to be dominated by anyone. But regarding the theocons, we say it all: there exists the founded suspicion that the USA is being transformed into an enormous theocratic power. Religious fanaticism becomes the basis of a strategy of conquest, the concept of democracy forgets that of tolerance, and the ethics of fanatical conviction is posed above that of rational responsibility. It is paradoxical to see the theocrats in command of the greatest global power and to ask yourself if it isn't necessary to deploy again a desacralizing, Voltarian critique of the sacred in order to weaken its political efficacy. The Iranian Imams are sometimes more sympathetic, at least when they flagellate themselves during their processions, than

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* A short cut to metaphysics.

the American theocons gathered around their gigantic Texan barbeques.

SCELSI: You don't think that on these themes related to life there emerge questions of identity of strongly political characters, from the movement in defense of life to that of AIDS sufferers, with important elements of novelty with respect to the "political" movements of the sixties?

NEGRI: Beyond a doubt. When I say that we live in a biopolitical environment, I mean that life is completely interwoven with politics, and at the end of the day it is the question of welfare that comes back into play. In reality, politics wanted to retreat from the things of life. This is a given that complicates everything. It withdrew because the capitalists insinuated the suspicion that it didn't have the money to manage the things of life. On the other hand, in my opinion, the budget of a state needs to stabilize above all else the possibility of intervening freely in the relations of life. There isn't a natural and bare life anymore, life is always clothed and historically determined. We need to be able to develop large means around life, to give money for the growth of the population to the producers of life (mothers, fathers), to act on the times of work, to leave free time to help the family and entertainment, call on foreigners in order to increase the population . . . Money that we invest in life stays in the body of the children we make . . . It seems so banal to me! When a baby is born, it is poor, you have to put an investment of discourses around it, investments of affects, relations; a baby is a discourse that is born, a baby is the beginning of the common, even if unwanted, because it sets the whole society to work around itself. The foundling has always been a very beautiful figure from this point of view.

Furthermore, we should emphasize once again that there was a transfer, in political philosophy, from themes of power to those of the biological terrain. Today, it's certain—the problem of life is at the center of the debate, even more so since welfare, after being realized, was defeated. Welfare represented an intervention of the State in life; at a certain point, it was pulled apart by neoliberalism but also by its bureaucratic urges. It had experienced a type of refusal by the people ("We don't want the State to intervene in our lives anymore"). In short, the end of welfare wasn't due only to the defeat of the working class, but also to the exhaustion and the corruption of the bureaucratic agencies of the working class and of the State. The end of the welfare state leaves a large space in the social autonomy of the multitude for the reconstruction of the common. When faced with these problems the organizations of the so-called Left don't know what to say or what to do. It is precisely this space of the common autonomy that was affirmed after the end of the welfare state. You can't go back anymore; there is now a sort of anthropological threshold that is irreversible. It is in the measure in which politicians refuse to recognize religion that it comes onto the scene to cover the emptiness of politics in comparison to the fullness of life. It is clear that religion intervenes in a nondemocratic way, that the fanaticism expressed around the divine untouchableness of the vital hides in the mists of the mystery, the possibility of human practices of support, and modification of what is alive. Religion once again is posed against science. But all that happens precisely because religion substitutes for democracy, repressing the knowledge and the joy of transforming the world that only the seculars know. We need to move against all of this.

SCELSI: We have almost arrived at a military clash, triggered by the nuclear question. Today Iran represents the figure of the

"rogue state" par excellence. Does it seem to you that the situation is really so dramatic?

NEGRI: I don't think so. Dramatic instead is the failure of unilateral American politics, which was really excited regarding Iran. Somebody says now—not in the little newspapers of the Italian Left, but in the most prestigious reviews of Princeton and Harvard—that American foreign politics is guided by Israeli diplomacy. I don't believe that this is true, at least not completely. There is no doubt that the Israelis don't like Iran, at least as much as Iran doesn't like them, but it is just as true that in this particular case, in the whole business of the Middle East, the hatreds don't correspond to fatal and necessary predispositions. Iran is the only country of the area that loved Israel in the past, and Israel loved Iran and Turkey precisely because they are non-Arab countries. The problem is another one—a directly American problem. In this case it isn't the Israelis who pressure the State Department, but the State Department that pressures the Israelis to act against Iran. Never like in this case, on the other hand, has the oil interest acted in the first person. Never, therefore, like in this case, do the Iranians demonstrate themselves to be defenders not only of their national interests, but of the interests of all the subjects of empire, with the end of organizing a multilateral system of power in order to resist the unilaterality of American imperial command. I don't think that in the short or medium term there will be another war in the Middle East. Already the two situations of open war, the Israeli-Palestinian and the Iraqi, have become festering, chronic, and both demonstrate the extreme weakness of imperial pressure. The paradox is that the Americans have to turn to Iran benevolently in order to stabilize the situation in Iraq. In this situation, who would be crazy enough to want or to be able

to open a third front in the Middle East? There remains the fact, however, that the Iranian theocracy, though certainly not totalitarian, is certainly insupportable for the free spirits who live in Iran. The most intelligent among the bosses of global oil want to be able to play the resistance of the Iranians off against power to their own advantage. Up until now, they haven't conducted themselves in a very clever way, because they have managed in reality to strengthen the national tendency and sometimes also the vigor of Persian nationalism. However, I'm not convinced that all this development, both by capitalist intelligence and by the Iranian resistance, can find a common outcome. Iran is a great country in the process of evolving toward postmodernity, both in terms of its culture and in terms of its productive form—but there isn't postmodern production without freedom. The wall the fanatical Shiites (they aren't greater monsters than the fanatical socialists were) have constructed around Iran will not fall due to external pressures, but only due to the unstoppable impulse that is born in the brain of the people.

14. MAY DAY: A STRANGE PRECARIAT IS ADVANCING

SCELSI: May Day and the question that is behind it: widespread precarity, demands for the redistribution of wealth, an attempt to organize the diffuse precariat. Can we sketch a panorama of it? What does it mean and what does it represent? It is an event that is spreading throughout Europe as well, in Spain in particular, even if it doesn't yet have the importance that it has in Italy, in Milan.

NEGRI: It is very important to see this ever-growing coming together of a population that doesn't have representation, either in the trade unions or in politics, and that in fact doesn't march in the demonstrations of the trade unions but, autonomously, in the afternoon of the first of May. This multitude presents itself in new forms, also by means of the way of expressing itself when demonstrating: large allegorical wagons, the capacity to move in a nonmilitary way, gathering and transforming traditions of "other" workers' movement. It is composed of the cognitariat, wage workers of knowledge with a middle to high level of education, accustomed to working with new informational instruments even if they aren't simply linked to communication but, for example, to productive services. They appear as a new productive labor power par excellence, able to valorize production and circulation of commodities. We need to undertake a theoretical consideration of all of this and derive a political evaluation from it.

The theoretical consideration: today the mutation of social stratifications obviously doesn't go—as the Left, on the other hand, maintains—toward the middle class but, on the contrary, enlarges the proletariat, attributing to it productive functions that were once typical of the middle class. The inability to understand this fact leads the Left to fall back on the defense of the old social stratifications and to address itself to a politics of alliance with the middle classes, which are thought of as unmodified by the cognitariat.

We are dealing with positions that therefore lead into fundamentally conservative politics from the social point of view: defense of the traditional working class and alliance with the middle classes of the old type, without therefore comprehending the fundamental element of the precaritization of the cognitariat. The new intellectual functions of labor carry in themselves a very high degree of mobility and flexibility, implicit therefore in the quality of the labor power. The worker himself often demands recognition of this new quality when he has the power and the capacity to do so. On the other hand, this characteristic is transformed into an experience of exploitation, diversified according to various times and spaces, that is, into a spatial and temporal mobility imposed by the bosses, in what is an objective dewaging or lowering of the costs of this labor power, which, in fact, on the contrary, is qualified, capable, and potent.

The same pattern of exchange between wages and profit and therefore of exploitation enters into play in these phenomena. Productivity always becomes more accumulation of creative elements of value spread out and put into circulation, which capital then captures. It is the subjects at work who cooperate and therefore produce, and capital that then captures that production. Every subject carries inside this activity a patrimony of knowledge that

is due to him—his own brain, as fixed capital—and in this way he puts it in circulation. Exploitation today can probably be defined, from a theoretical point of view, essentially as capitalist expropriation of the cooperative power that the singularities of cognitive labor deploy in the social process. It isn't capital anymore that organizes labor, but labor that organizes itself in itself. Capital in turn steals its subjective potential.

Today, in a new *tableau économique*, the lines of division are no longer simply between capital and labor, but rather, between capital and the various forms of labor that are slowly being organized outside of the direct relation with capital. It isn't capital anymore that produces the capacity of communication and cooperation; these forces themselves determine themselves as powers. Productive powers aren't so much those that integrate immediately the power of capital as those fractions of labor power that are posted outside of capital. They are already in a condition of exodus.

From the political point of view, the Left doesn't understand the fundamental rupture that is cultural, economic, and that enters into the biopolitical nexus of the new labor power regarding the capitalist organization of society. The Left manages to imagine only a seizure of power, that is, putting itself in the place of the capitalists in order to manage the reality of economic development. On the contrary, this new labor power doesn't present any homogeneity with the old concept of power, with private or public ownership of the systems of production, that is, with that which is capitalist development and even its socialist forms. Here instead there is the problem of the common and therefore of the capacity of the actors to express a series of common values.

In May Day these things appear in a confused way, in particular on the question of the income of citizenship. That is, in the

political demand that the fundamental rights of one's own reproduction are recognized in citizenship, among which is a decent wage. If the productive base is fundamentally the totality of social relations and if the cooperative force is constructed between social and productive forces (independently from capitalist intervention), that means that labor power is sufficient unto itself for constructing wealth and order. Therefore this independence, this self-sufficiency, needs to be recognized in terms of the wage.

The income of citizenship can be understood in more or less radical forms. It is less radical if the income of citizenship is itself a functional element of capitalist development. Capitalist development has defined a relationship with the social in which the public sphere of the social becomes the basis of production. Income of citizenship consequently becomes the recognition by the capitalist forces of this fact. Functional means that faced by the allocation of income, the subjects are, however, asked for compensation, which can be a form of submission of various types, but always within criteria of measure such as to maintain and to reproduce the relationship of wage exploitation. Otherwise the quantity of income of citizenship will have to be measured with the capitalist possibilities of reproducing capitalist powers and the correlative hierarchies.

On the other hand, I believe that the demand for an income of citizenship is increasingly presented as a refusal of work and of the wage relationship. Therefore, the income of citizenship, understood in a radical sense, doesn't appear anymore as something that is offered in exchange for something that is owed, but as a definitive declaration of the effective independence and autonomy of working subjects in relation to capital. This is a dis-

course that circulates in the cognitive labor power characterized by autonomy, independence, and cooperative capacity.

May Day tries to represent this new condition of labor power. It isn't by accident that it was the chain workers, that is, the workers in the commercial chain stores, who triggered this initiative or that the forms of mobilization go by way of informational circuits or that, besides typical demands regarding wages, May Day has also addressed fundamental questions like no copyright protection, the free circulation of IT materials, and problems technically linked to the circulation of knowledge. All these questions or, better, struggles are beginning to be expressed autonomously in Europe, even beyond the intentions of those who started to organize the May Day Parade. Today May Day is an autonomous process, a network within which there are many different collectives and subjectivities in all of Europe, beginning with different levels of contradiction that are experienced in different territories, but all have in common the demand of a universal income of citizenship and the use of alternative radical practices compared to those of the trade unions and the parties of the Left. May Day is much more than a simultaneous series of parades, it is a process of recomposition, constituent of a new post-Fordist proletariat.

SCELSI: The precariat is very widespread in Italy. What situation is there in other European countries? Is it a new model of the use of labor power, specific to this cycle of capital?

NEGRI: The precaritization of intellectual labor power is one of the characteristics of the new forms of capitalist exploitation, in particular of the Anglo-American type: Atlantic liberalism. It is clear that along with the urged precaritization of labor power, very

precise capitalist preoccupations also emerge, such as the fear of social destabilization that precaritization brings with it and the fear of too much mobility. There is furthermore a great fear of the fluxes of immigrant manual labor, which for the rest have become very important, as central elements in the modification of the social fabric and in the process of the devaluation of the wage. However, the Anglo-Saxon model has won in relation to the progress of the society of services and the informatization of the social; therefore, this process of precaritization seems unstoppable and irreversible.

A complex dynamic has thrown the other capitalist model, the French-German, into a serious crisis. Resistance to this social transformation has been seen, for example, in the refusal of the European Constitution and in the generalization of the refusal, even if belatedly, among some elements of the Italian, German, and Spanish Left. On this terrain we need to pay attention. This process can't be refused or driven back without first creating new structures for the defense of the worker, like the income of citizenship and new forms of representation.

Labor power doesn't want to be precarious, but it wants to be free to be mobile and flexible if this is the case. Men and women see labor above all as a power [potenza] open to those modifications of habit that constitute the multitudinous freedom of singularities as a fundamental element of life.

SCELSI: Then there are schedules of labor and the city that come into conflict with the rhythms of life . . . But this precarious work has many similarities with the dynamics of the working poor, with the form of labor that hardly allows you to survive. What do you think of these relations?

NEGRI: In the immigration of the first generations there is an enormous power of labor, of the desire to flee, of the right to flee. For Marx, the immigrants were as free as birds, and in this freedom to fly he glimpsed great potentialities. Then the immigrant isn't always poor; behind him he has relations that allow him to set himself up in the city. Obviously, I don't deny that in many cases poverty is dramatic, however, we have to start considering poverty as a great machine and also as productive capacity. We have to refuse the concept of poverty as pure exclusion in order to approach the power of poverty with real openness. This isn't a Christian attitude, but a realistic one and derives from the difficulty of recognizing the inflexible and immobile enclosures on the part of the capitalist system inside the flexibility and mobility of this society in general. In this society, you can try to close and hierarchize, as capitalist development has always allowed and now requires, but it is increasingly difficult to pose things in an exclusionary way. No barrier can contain the unstoppable flow of migration and exodus.

Thus the most lively trade unionism, that which poses the income of citizenship, increasingly assumes a transnational dimension, breaking the hierarchies of the frontier, as happened in California, where the agencies of struggle of the migrants working in cleaning—who are for the most part Latino—launched the campaign called Justice for Janitors with the idea of constructing a transnational trade union between Mexico and the United States. It is a case of an experience that could also be proposed in Europe, where we have always talked of unifying the different national centers, leaving to each of these their own specific task. The "trade unions of the flow" could instead have a very important role, changing the nature of the trade union itself inso-

far as it is a cooperative force. Also in Italy, the Left and the cooperatives long ago became great machines for the defense of preconstituted interests . . . We need to give it a push toward a radical change.

SCELSI: The great mobilization of May Day is surprising. However, in the environment of daily life the organization of the struggles of this precariat finds it difficult to develop itself and put down roots. There isn't a significant level of self-organization. In reality, we are increasingly faced with individual modalities in the processes of wage demands, despite the common condition. There is a concrete difficulty in unifying working paths, even those equal among themselves. What can we say about this?

NEGRI: It is true, there is a real difficulty. Some struggles have been organized, but there is a certain difficulty in recognizing dynamics of generalization of income. This, however, is the only way of beginning to construct a capacity of struggle around the income of citizenship. On the other hand, there are experiences in which precarious labor in struggle is inserted in and appropriated by trade union structures of fixed labor for an indeterminate time, as in the case of the current struggle of the transport workers in New York where many precarious workers have been involved.

In general, there was always the hope that the struggles of the new labor power could function a little like a relay race, in which the baton was passed slowly from the old union organizations to the new labor power, in the hope of avoiding that things would have to start again from the beginning. Unfortunately, this hope has often turned out to be an illusion.

I am therefore convinced that the struggles of the precariat can

make a bigger impact on the metropolitan level, like struggles about common services or housing, etc. From the moment when it is difficult to define a single wage demand, perhaps it is easier to begin to think of a series of rights linked to one's own reproduction, health, culture, housing, education of children. These are all rights whose exercise (and whose recognition) constitutes a form of wage. Here, all this can begin to construct the content of a universal wage demand by the precariat of the metropolis. The openings in the assembly demands of the university students during the occupation in Rome of La Sapienza and other Italian universities regards this type of problem of a general character in the metropolis. A unionism of the metropolis.

This emerges forcefully in the events related to the struggle against the CPE, the measure of the French government that institutionalizes the precariat, contested loudly by the students and also by the unions in the spring of 2006, but we'll talk about this soon.

SCELSI: An income of citizenship is one thing, a quota by means of which anybody can manage their right to life. It is another thing to offer a bill of rights, a type of rations card that satisfies a series of needs. In the previous forms of welfare, there were things that had already been acquired. In a phase of generalized reduction of welfare and of the loss of rights, how do we act in order to gain an enlarged redistribution, by means of the income of citizenship of social services, which governments instead want to reduce and to shrink?

NEGRI: Be careful. To begin with, I believe that the aggressive neoliberal cycle is definitively terminated. After the recent phase of economic crisis, the relauching of economies also goes by way

of consumption internal to single capitalist countries. A more open wage politics becomes almost inevitable. It isn't an accident that the defeat, for example, of the flat tax is being registered, as well as the abandonment of the ideology that was at the base of Thatcher's first decisions. We are on terrain that is no longer that of the sharp reduction of welfare.

At any rate, when you speak of the reduction of welfare, you are speaking of two things: on the one hand, the private appropriation of some services and, on the other, putting savings into productive circulation, as in the case of pensions or the refeudalization and communism of capital. The first process is being reduced, as the attempts at privatization have reached an extreme and are now confronted by real blocks (also for reasons of unsustainable strong investment), while the second is expanding and constitutes a truly global capitalist project that includes the biopolitical question.

SCELSI: However, at the last meeting of the WTO . . .

NEGRI: Yes, but you need to see up to what point they push on the terrain of privatization of services and common goods . . . I have the impression that they aren't really able to.

The only possibility of movement on the income of citizenship, I believe, is in combining the metropolitan demand for rights with a workers' action expanded to wages. For now, we can count on examples linked to transport and the home. We need to leave behind certain forms of struggle linked to the factory, to the wage, and to the direct relation of the union boss and move on to forms of struggles over citizenship and the biopolitical rhythms of development. We have attempts, experiences, but in order to elaborate platforms of struggle in this direction the instrument of the inquiry remains fundamental.

I am convinced that the multitude is at the metropolis like the working class was at the factory. Forms of struggle like those exercised by the Parisian *banlieusards* mirror those of the Luddites in the factory, which preceded the formation of the organized working class. They are struggles of sabotage, of rupture, of communication. The wage isn't only money. It is a case of important relations of force in the content, but also in the expression and the recognition of subjects in struggle. For me, the precariat isn't made up only of egoistical beings, nor merely of individuals; the factory worker also loved to appear like this sometimes, for example, with respect to agricultural workers. On the contrary, the revolutionary recomposition of subjects is occurring a little everywhere, in terms of the construction of the common. It will therefore be in the relation between the new cognitive proletariat and the metropolis, in a metropolitan fabric that is in itself productive that the wage problem will be posed in a new form: as a hypothesis of income of citizenship understood as the common appropriation of the city, not simply as wage quantity, but as a relation of power that is expressed in the functioning of the city.

But, I stress, the inquiries remain fundamental, inquiries on the flows, on the essential biopolitical themes. We will specify the content depending upon each case; we can't make menus of the struggles today. Only the inquiry predetermines the content of the struggles.

SCELSI: The relational wage dynamic of citizenship, if we think of it as a relation, is in relation to the demanding and organizing force. If this force is weak, the relational capacity of acquisition will be weak.

NEGRI: You are right. Still . . . On the one hand, it is something utopian. Today, in order to enrich the population and the multitude, we need to increase to the maximum the possibilities of internal communication, of interaction. This interaction in the metropolitan structure is in large part implicit; it needs to be recognized and pushed forward. Inside this process it is inevitable that economic values are in some manner redistributed; the form with which this occurs is a further problem. In the phase of transition we are experiencing, the relation between movements and organizational structures occurs in the forms of governance; tomorrow it will be in the figure of the "Soviet plus the Internet" (whatever the legitimate ironies).

From a concrete point of view, if the metropolises don't experiment with the direct and continuous cooperation of the multitude, they don't function. The metropolis is a complex machine that needs to be made to work. We shouldn't think that the maintenance costs of the city should be reduced merely to the cost of security (widespread video surveillance, for example, which functions as private police units in the cities of the first and third world). Large cities can't function this way. The metropolis needs to be free, yet freedom is played with as the compensation given in the distribution of the social wage. With the wage there won't ever be free cities.

SCELSI: There is the model of Los Angeles, a city characterized by an omnipresent police, aggressive and very powerful, able to influence even the architectural development of the city itself, and very experienced gangs in the neighborhoods. But there is also the European model, which seems to me to be your inspiration and which responds to different logics . . .

NEGRI: There is also the model of the metropolis of the Veneto (different from Paris and Berlin), which is a polycentric metropolis; the problem is taking up again the two functions of constructing common production and distributing common wealth. This is communism, even if here there are privileged situations, like, for example, that of elevated medical standards.

How do we win an adequate level of struggle? By doing inquiries, as was once done in the factories, but in the metropolis. By looking for the points of fragility in order to decide where to intervene and by demonstrating that there can't be a common management by means of a government of the rich for exploitation.

The model of Los Angeles . . . To the studies of Mike Davis, interesting but partial in certain respects, we need to add studies of other metropolises, Chicago in the first place. Others have done it, and it demonstrated how the metropolis could be turned inside out like a sock by the singularities that live there and that come together in order to construct a productive motor of riches and happiness. We need to realize how fragile biopowers can be in postmodernity and how strong the biopolitical force of the new proletariat can be. In the metropolis, for obvious reasons, capitalist biopower can't take recourse to instruments of war; this single fact has to give us the energy to begin to act in a subversive manner in the metropolis.

SCELSI: The new precarious labor, the cognitariat, has in its essence a cooperative form, but it is contained in the capitalist structure of labor. Why don't we come back to looking at the self-organization of labor?

NEGRI: I agree with you, but we should pay attention to the fact that cooperation has been absorbed by extremely ambiguous, mixed forms of private and public property.

To start with, we need to work to define a common right between private and public right. What is common right? It is that right that accompanies the decisional self-valorization of subjects with the general appropriation of the productive instruments. You can already experiment with all this when you are immersed in a productive area. The best example is the informational production of knowledge and action, though remembering all the possible cautions. We need to insist on the perspective of common right; we are on the verge of a new civilization.

SCELSI: Therefore your vision of the future is of a developmentalist type?

NEGRI: Maybe, maybe not. There are such a number of new needs linked to singularity, to intellectual labor, and to the freedom of single producers that I really don't know if here it is possible to speak of developmentalism in the old way. And on the other hand, there are different commodities, rich and unexpected. Regarding developmentalism, it was defined in a precise way as a quantitative horizon of consumerism, in short, a restricted vision of the concept of modernity.

I want to say that we aren't in the old modernity but rather in hypermodernity, and not in that hypermodernity that, though irritating the fundamental values, keeps them intact, among them development—as if you could redistribute the old values on this new "hyper" terrain.

The social democratic theorists say "hypermodernity," theorists like [Ulrich] Beck, for example, who aren't able to comprehend fully the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, who don't see the demise of modernity and cling to thinking of themselves as immersed in a world where the old condition of labor, that of fac-

tory labor, remains insuperable or, rather, *hyper*insuperable. In the same way, these hypermodernists still appeal to the Fordist concept of national production, even now when globalization is a fact of absolute reality. To conclude, these friends of ours, in the end, refuse exodus.

I use "postmodernity" instead to indicate a rupture with respect to the "hyper"; velocity and machines don't interest me anymore. The velocity that I have is enough for me, completely. I want an intensification of communications, which is something different from velocity of transport. I still want development because I want to develop human capacities but outside of models of hypermodernity; outside of that there is another real modernity, it is modernity but *other*. Health, continuous information, homes, a livable city, above all I want a sphere of the common, enthusiasm together with others, a knowledge that is also valid for the young generations not exhausted by life. I want Exodus.

SCELSI: Now that we have spoken of all this, tell me what is happening in France, where a strange precariat really seems to be advancing . . .

NEGRI: *Douce France, doux pays de mon enfance** . . . What happened was incredible. They started in November 2005, those poor things of the *banlieues*, and then from February to March 2006 a movement blew up in Paris that assumed the dimensions of 1968. The most striking thing was the harmonizing of two movements—not because both had a common organization,

* Gentle France, the gentle land of my childhood. From a popular French song by Charles Trenet.

but simply because they found a common objective of struggle. There were those who described these movements as a resistance to the establishment of neoliberal capitalism, almost as if the protesters were many little Asterixes* who, beginning in their beautiful village in Gaul, resisted Roman imperialism. What happened is completely different. It wasn't a case of resistance but of offense. It was the first revolt of the post-Fordist and cognitive proletariat against the new forms of global capitalism. It wasn't a case and it isn't a case of reactionary resistance against the establishment of a new economic global order, but of the first forms of struggle that announce a future of movements and of revolutionary transformations inside a new capitalism, the cognitive capitalism that is now established. Neoliberalism has become the form of cognitive neocapitalism, and the movements have recognized in this transition their renewal. What is the common trait that has touched all these French movements and has defined their antagonistic behavior? They were built essentially by educated workers, by precarious workers, by so-called young people in training, by doctorates and postdoctorates without jobs, by people who undertake an activity without being stably employed, by workers of different sectors of the economy, intermittent, freelance, independent, and autonomous workers of the new type, always between waged work and working for themselves. Sectors of the economy that aren't structural or secondary parts of the labor market, as one once said, workers linked to an unstable demand or one that varies widely throughout the year, etc., etc. I could talk for hours about what labor has become today. The governments of the Scandinavian countries have taken conscience

* The main character in a popular French comic book series.

of flex security, that is, of the necessity to construct a minimum of social protection for this new destabilized labor power. Also here in Italy some now start to speak about the necessity of introducing an income of citizenship as a safety net with respect to the fall of the classic wage forms of redistribution of wealth and control of the relation of exploitation. Actually, these French struggles go beyond even the presupposed contexts of these institutional political responses. What is probably in crisis, let's say it again, is the very wage regime. There is exploitation not of the consumption of labor power, but of labor power's very availability to posit itself as a subject of exploitation. Exploitation not only of production, but of cooperation and therefore of socialization, which labor power anticipates with respect to the capitalist organization of society. The capitalist capture of living labor, of its cooperation and surplus is developed now on the social level. It is on this social level that the struggle, first, of the so-called excluded of the *banlieues*, then of the so-called integrated precariat of the metropolitan center has occurred in France. Actually, the thing against which millions of young people have struggled, with the silent and vocal support of their families and of the very corporative trade unions, isn't anything but the last piece of a politics of deregularization of the labor market. And yet, at the same time, they put up a general resistance against the very organization of capitalist work. You needed to see them, these students of the *banlieues* and of the center of Paris; there wasn't anything anymore in their struggles, in their behavior that represented an apology of work. Full-time work is dead due to an accident at work: this is the general awareness. The unions have joined this struggle in a hearty way, exactly as the unions of the Teamsters joined the struggle of the alternative globalizers of Seattle. Cer-

tainly, better [Bernard] Thibault, secretary of the CGT,* than [Luciano] Lama or Cofferati, who were disposed to attack the "second society" and noncorporatized work rather than attempt a political mediation of it. It is amusing when, reading the Italian newspapers, the most Left, or rather the most opportunist, say, "Paris, yes, Milan or Rome, no." Will they ever be able to explain to me why, when the students occupied the universities in Italy against the Moratti decree, speaking explicitly of precarity, asking for a table of discussion on the terrain of precarity and of income, the unions put up walls rather than support the students against the neoliberal government? But let's move on. In France things went differently. Here it wasn't only a case of great demonstrations of millions of people in the street repeated every week, it was an almost insurrectional movement. When the students exited the high schools of the Parisian periphery every morning, it wasn't in order to go to the demonstration at the Champs-Élysées, but to block the railway or the highway that was in the neighborhood of their high school. And when the police arrived (if they arrived, given the number of demonstrations that there were), these students immediately lit up all the cars in the neighborhood, thus repeating the splendors of the revolt of the *banlieues*. The propaganda and the press attempted to oppose one against the other, the *banlieues* and the students; they talked of bands of wild rascals, young crossbreeds who attacked blonde Norman or Breton students, taking their cell phones, wallets, and iPods . . . Certainly that happened . . . It has to be said that the blond Parisian students don't resemble at all the old people from whom you can impudently tear away a handbag . . . At any rate,

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* The Confédération Générale du Travail, a French trade union.

all this was ridiculously inessential with respect to the theme of the struggle.

The movement of the students and the precarious (and you should number among these the *banlieusards*) was the motor of a powerful process of social recomposition that was at the same time territorial and intergenerational, cultural and political. These young people and less young people have shown what a wage struggle in biopolitical society is. They want to find a house, eat, learn, have a family when they want, produce or access diversified information and a diversified culture, play, exchange knowledge freely, take care of their own health, create any form of wealth, move or not freely, participate in the life of the city, create new public spaces or new social ways of life. In short, they declare that their lives are not negotiable. Faced with these insurrectional forms from the point of view of the program, and revolutionary from the point of view of action, the French government hasn't been able to do anything except cede. [Charles] de Gaulle didn't do it when faced with 1968, but [Jacques] Chirac did when faced with 2006. Years that went by in vain, from 1968 to today? Nobody would dare say it. Then, in 1968, beyond the demagogy, we still struggled for the wage; today, without any rhetoric, we struggle beyond the wage regime.

SCELSI: In the account of the French struggles, the modes, the symbolic languages that were utilized also seem to me to be important—the unifying use of hip-hop culture, which in certain respects represents the common terrain of the young of the *banlieues* and beyond. An underground culture is in action therefore, a culture that furnishes a common background on which a language and some more traditionally political goals have subsequently been able to install themselves. What do you think of that?

NEGRI: I am convinced of it, even if sometimes I have to fight with friends on this point. But, fundamentally, to assume the subversive culture of the subproletariat is a motor of political recomposition is part of one of the best traditions of subversive action. There remains the fact that here, in this case, there isn't only tradition but actuality, there isn't only a literary or musical history but an experience of infraction and rupture. Rap in France has developed, despite its being blocked by the media, into one of the most radical forms of resistance. Rap and all the expressions of subaltern cultural discontent in France (I mean inside metropolitan France) are an ever-repeating neocolonial efficacy. The racism of French society and the importance of Lepenism* cannot in any case be undervalued. This is what gives rise to the extreme importance, culturally unifying and politically militant, of the expressions of hip-hop. The great demonstrations of March–April 2006, like the myriad local insurgencies between periphery and *banlieues*, were characterized by a persistent rap that was anything but monotonous: sometimes it was really poetic, undoubtedly more powerful than the music of the bard of Asterix. Rap is the soundtrack of the revolt of the crossbreed multitude.

* Refers to the French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen and his xenophobic, racist ideas.

15. ITALY: THE MEDIOCRE ANOMALY

SCELSI: At this point, I would like you to develop an analysis of Italy. Italy has been an anomaly at the international level for more than a century. Before this was the case relative to the modalities of the unification of the country or the birth of fascism. In the seventies, the "great Italian anomaly" regarded the communist party as the strongest communist party in the West and also the force of the movements. Italy is also a country where the Church is rooted in all the important centers of power and society, and last but not least, the country where Berlusconism was born. I'll begin with this last fact. Is Berlusconism a political model that is valid on an international level? It seems to me that it has already been imitated in Mexico, Singapore, even in Poland . . .

NEGRI: The appearance of Berlusconi was a strange event. After the old political system of the socialist and Demo-Christian Right was cleared away, Berlusconi appeared, giving the impression of a man of the Right but also, in certain respects, of a modernizer. He did this by referring, first of all, to Thatcherian politics and also by linking himself to specific dynamics of Italian industry following the crisis of Fordism. As noted, instead of turning to high technologies and services, Italian industry specialized in social production of a diffused type. There was the new productive system of the northeast spread out all over the north and along the Adriatic, around which Berlusconi had constructed in parallel his advertising networks, which he then used for his election. It was an election that wasn't

seen positively by Confindustria* and the big powers, which weren't against the fact that the Left could manage that phase. Berlusconi is therefore linked to the anomaly of the Italian productive fabric, but he wasn't able to develop a liberal economic politics adequate to this reality, nor could he renovate the Thatcherian model. He played opportunistically in defense of his own interests, engaging in very deep and never-before-seen corruption.

SCELSI: What do you mean by corruption?

NEGRI: The agreement with the big parties for reciprocal immunity, for the redivision of powers and their neutralization, contrary to the constitution, and the development of new forms of private appropriation in order to subdivide the wealth of the country by means of the use of instruments of government.

Berlusconi's corruption isn't only that of money—he is, though, very rich because of it—it is corruption linked to the transformation of the industrial structure of the economy of services, to the falsification and the partition of sectors of power, which was done with the fundamental agreement of the Democrats of the Left. Confindustria assumed an attitude of distance as long as it wasn't repaid with the big projects of roadwork and railways, but the foreignness remains evident. Berlusconi has never conquered or seduced the strong powers, and in fact, when he tried to get his hands on them they rapped him on the knuckles. There remains the fact that Berlusconi is a catastrophe for the country. All the negative and inertial moments of globalization arrived in Italy without being controlled or managed in any way, even by a guide of the Right! We are in the heaviest contradic-

* The association of big industries in Italy.

tions, and if Europe weren't on the doorstep, we would be in a situation like the Argentinean one.

Further, the incapacity of the Left to present something that even resembles a program is incredible. It doesn't present it because in reality it would be too similar to Berlusconi's. In all these years, the Left hasn't managed to understand the transformation of labor power and of the way of life; it exhausts itself around the shoddy repetition of Blarian policies, with the difference that Blair had Thatcher before him. This descent of the Huns had, in fact, allowed him to reconstruct something. In Italy, this wasn't the case; the first and the second republic are like ice and water, and in fact, the only "new idea" is that of reconstructing the center of the first republic, unpunished and unpunishable.

The contemporary Left is frightening . . . I have always thought since the end of the fifties when I joined parties of the Left that there was a certain sense of modernity and development in them. Even if the movements paid some enormous costs, I thought they comprehended a Hegelian astuteness that would allow the Left to progress as a social body. But the sacrifices they imposed on us were useless sacrifices. I'll suggest a type of allegory to see to what extent these forces have been discredited. It's not the revenge of which Mao [Tse-tung] spoke, but we have almost reached the point of seeing them pass by dead in the river, not only due to the absence of programs, but to their failure to listen to the people, to the lack of trust and the lack of pleasure in doing politics. I have never seen figures so sad and lacking in passions or, rather, endowed with true and proper sad passions, like the current leadership of the Italian Left. Sad passions that can't be covered by the sense of responsibility or the heaviness of the task of representation of the subaltern class, which they don't listen to anyway or

even hear anymore. They are bureaucrats, scraping together a living from their petty wages with exhausted intellectual expressions.

The old Italian Communist Party betrayed the revolutionary idea and sacrificed many hopes and desires. The last official communists I knew were all neurotic; now instead there isn't even the possibility of a confrontation. Those were giants compared to these gentlemen. I don't believe that you can say that they are equal to those of the Right, but they are equally miserable and just as much representatives of a total banality. They are ridiculous, "new believers," as [Giacomo] Leopardi said of some of his contemporaries, transformists. There isn't one among them that isn't a negationist and revisionist on everything. Communism frightens them.

When it goes well, all this is covered up by an image of unscrupulous and cynical political realism, or by the demand for the autonomy of the political, which claims to construct an objectively necessary comportment. For example, Cofferati managed to put together a demonstration of two, three million people without even understanding the reason for it, and then to fall again into a stupor of municipal realism. At any rate, in Italy, regarding the Left, we are faced with a negative lack of proportionality, which represents an insupportable surplus with respect to the modification of social relations.

In Italy there was very strong modernization, now exhausted, but nevertheless incredible. There was then an evolution of extreme velocity. This is the Italian exception: in the course of thirty years we have become a mature industrial society. If industrialization occurred in other countries in two centuries, in our country it happened during the twenties for northern Italy and between the fifties and sixties in the rest of the country.

Berlusconism is connected in this disequilibrium of values

with an entrepreneurial attitude that saves it from the vulgarity of [Bettino] Craxi, but that nevertheless conserves a negative dimension of it. A crude caricature of Italian disequilibrium.

What an effort this transition was. In the first developmentalist phase, the PCI held things up; then it didn't understand that inside development there should be constructed other perspectives of radical democracy, of the liberation of new needs linked to new intellectual and cognitive energies of labor, new needs of liberty.

Further, one of the comical elements of this current phase is the ambiguity of these political exponents when faced with Catholic neomedievalism. All of a sudden, they all reveal that they have been educated by Jesuits and Salesians, the worst of the Catholic tradition. We are faced with the pleasure of leveling and uniformity.

The reality is that these men of the Left haven't understood even minimally the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, beginning in the seventies; when they have understood it, they have preferred to be reactionaries, that is, to defend their fiefdoms. This was the case of Unipol and the cooperatives.

That communist party that we liked very much didn't understand the crisis of Fordism. This certainly doesn't mean that there isn't a need to defend the workers, but it was necessary to do it (at least beginning in the 1970s) by facilitating the transition of the baton, of passing from the hegemony of the working class of the factory to the hegemony of the multitudes in the metropolises. And it was a case of making the capacity of struggle grow toward that second terrain. This was the only real socialist perspective. But these have done exactly the opposite until the point of exhaustion. They haven't reconsidered the needs of the proletariat in the metropolis; rather, they have identified them with the new middle classes. Even the Italian economists, on the other hand, haven't

understood the transformations underway. Giddens and others instead have understood that the middle class has become something different, they have understood the value of the intellectual function, taking up themes of feminism regarding the needs of women immersed in the market and sensing the uncertainty of the middle classes. Though Blairism has difficulty in understanding the multitudinous urban proletariat, in England some social democratic elements have remained in Blairism; here, instead, in Italy, there is nothing.

SCELSI: At the end of the 1970s, when Asor Rosa theorized the existence of a society divided between guaranteed and nonguaranteed workers, though excluding politically the latter, at least Asor admitted their existence. Recognition of the transition between Fordism and post-Fordism, also from the theoretical point of view, happened very late on the other hand . . .

NEGRI: I didn't invent the reality of things when I theorized the social worker. It was 1973! The hypothesis of the social worker and the discovery made of the socialization of labor brought back some criteria of class, criteria that were then understood improperly in the transition to post-Fordism. In short, this transition was already sensed in a clear way. There were things that came to me from experience, certainly, but others that I read about in the sociological literature back then regarding the transition toward a new form of production. The first perception of this transformation was related to the relation between automation in the factory and informationalization of the social, when they began to expel labor power from the central factory. Then began the reorganization of the cycle of labor in the Swedish factories. Therefore, there was the transition to Toyotaism, with a specific role assigned to the

externalization of the whole cycle of the production/circulation of commodities. Here there was in play as a fundamental element the relation between automatization in the factory and informationalization of the social. In the early 1970s, when the factories began to throw labor out, they did it in a circuit still strongly linked to the factory, sending the punch cards to the milling cutters of the workshops of Brianza and the Alto Milanese. Then everything changed. "Diffuse" labor isn't dependent on large-scale industry but becomes itself the central subject.

Post-Fordist processes revolve politically around a perspective of global market and the fluctuation of currencies; [Henry] Kissinger and [Richard] Nixon release the dollar from gold at the same time as the first great oil crisis. It's an operation that achieves a double effect: fluidification of monetary relations, while the oil crisis actively poses a different mechanism of division. Energy costs rise considerably, but that isn't to the benefit of the countries of the third world, beginning to combine new instances coming, for example, from Latin America and the Middle East. Here the transition to post-Fordism is configured. They are not only techniques of production but, just as Fordism was Taylorism and Keynesianism, post-Fordism is at the same time automatization of the factory and informationalization of production, it is social fluidification. In the place of Fordism (and the wage regime connected to it) there is the precaritization of labor, and in the place of Keynesian macroeconomics, liberal macroeconomics, which now become global.

And the DS not only don't understand anything of all this, but they would be happy with it, if it weren't because they find themselves faced with the resistance of this extraordinary Italian working class, consolidated by a tradition of exceptional struggle:

the conjugation between peasants and workers, first, in the great process of internal emigration, and 1968, which acted as an explosive event in the unity between industrial workers and the new cognitive labor. These DSs don't understand anything, because they celebrate a certain type of modernization that evolved in the sense expected by the Trilateral Commission.

The other problem is political: no longer Taylorism but the fluidificaiton of labor power, no longer Fordism but precaritization, no longer macroeconomic techniques of control but pure monetarism. What is the consequence?

The document of the Trilateral Commission was focused on the necessity of putting the brakes on democracy because the workers' and postcolonials' struggles had made every Fordist criterion of the fixing of power fall. Beginning from here, there is the necessity of a strongly controlled democracy; the transition from the first to the second republic exemplified this condition.

In this situation, the Left doesn't have the role of guide in the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, from the working class to the multitude. Rather, it plays with its cooperatives and savings banks; the unions are transformed into corporations while, on the other hand, the Soviet Union has exhausted its role as the "hope of transformation" for the proletariat.

Now, here, our comrades back off. The only point of attack has played on the issue of respect for the constitution, with deeper work on the part of judges and the police related to morality. [Enrico] Berlinguer* and his restricted circle don't know how badly they had acted in transforming morality into a type of icon of their political survival. The transformation of the sympathy of [Giuseppe] Di Vit-

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* The leader of the Communist Party in Italy at the end of the '70s and early '80s.

torio* into the discipline of [Luciano] Lama,** the smile of the first and the smirk of the second, the sadness of Berlinguer as sign of responsibility and of ethics and then the sneer of [Luciano] Violante*** . . . Here we are at the end of the dream of freedom and the joy of being communists; you're in the hands of a Sicilian *campiere* ["gentleman"] who stays close to power.

SCELSI: However, the incomprehension of the social and productive transformation remains central. Otherwise, the PCI wouldn't have arrived at the referendum on wage indexation in 1984. Don't you believe, with respect to all that, that the socialist leadership was maybe more lucid?

NEGRI: There was incomprehension but also the decision to close themselves up in the corporations and the cooperatives in the big administrated regions—a form of self-defense. The Soviet Union was in pieces, and they had to defend themselves from everything—at least, this is what they say. They didn't have the identity anymore of any type of socialist party, nor the identity of a trade union . . . The Soviet crisis was immense.

SCELSI: However, in 1976, the Soviet Union was a step away from control of the world financial market when it took control of the oil market after the crisis of Yom Kippur . . .

NEGRI: The 1970s were marked by the decay of the Soviet structure, despite its international force.

SCELSI: It's true, however, that at the end of the 1970s a strong

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* The leader of CGIL, the main union of the Left in Italy, in the late '40s and '50s.
** The CGIL leader in the '70s and '80s.
*** A former magistrate and Communist Party member, now a leader of the new Democratic Party.

debate started on the role of the Soviet Union and whether it was still a model of reference. It's enough to recall Berlinguer's positions in this regard . . .

NEGRI: In the idea of historical compromise there was already the abandonment of the privileged relation with the Soviet Union. The great rupture happened after 1968, following the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

SCELSI: If from an economic-productive point of view the PCI reads the phase in terms of taking up a defensive position, there are also shadows regarding the relation constructed with the world of the judiciary. For example, the elaboration of penitism, a revised strategy in action, though only in part, also applied in the 1990s to Berlusconi.

NEGRI: The techniques of penitism in the United States and England are normal things; in France they are entrusted to the police instead of to the judiciary, even if the judiciary is better. It is frightening that in Italy the use of these methods has become a symbol of justice; this is true Catho-communism—the need to confess, the need to slander, the need to speak in order to be readmitted to the social world. It is also an Islamic thing, not only Western; you need to speak in order to avoid being stoned.

SCELSI: The fall of the Wall and its meaning for Italy. Craxi maintained that this event would have greater impact on the PCI than on the Italian Socialist Party, and instead the only one to fall was the PSI.

NEGRI: The socialists haven't managed to intuit that after the fall of the Berlin Wall politics of "the end justifies the means" and corruption could no longer be covered up by the execution of

functionary roles. The socialists haven't understood that a series of political habits, admissible in a reality marked by dual global hegemony, couldn't be tolerated anymore after 1989. This leads us to think about the consequences of the "second" war in Iraq, which is determining phenomena analogous to corruption in so-called moderate Arabism.

SCELSI: The fall of the Wall, displacement of the socialist leadership, and in a few years there is the tornado. All wash their hands and dismiss a whole leading class marked with the stigmata of infamy . . .

NEGRI: But underneath there is the transformation of the Italian economic reality. You can't write history *sic et simpliciter** by washing your hands of the matter. Instead, it needs to be inserted in a discontinuity of social relations that is very deep. The 1970s see the definitive defeat of the old block of the traditional class, with its parties and its political and social composition. The 1980s open onto the constitution of a new block, and there is Craxi's** attempt to interpret it in terms of the middle classes, mystifying, that is, the existence of the new multitudes in the concept of the middle class. He doesn't succeed with this game because in reality, first of all, the PCI doesn't give him respite on this terrain, presenting itself to the middle classes as the party of morality; second, there is a new small industry that they aren't able to pick up. The socialists would have been able to win the battle if they had full conscience of the social transformation underway. They tried instead a game still linked to the old economic and political rela-

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* In this way and simply.
** The Socialist Party leader in Italy in the '80s and early '90s.

tions, not being able to make the play that Berlusconi was later able to make. Craxi was still within a suffocating political tradition. Berlusconi, [Marcello] Dell'Utri, [Cesare] Previti, [Vittorio] Dotti were of an entirely different world, more unscrupulous. They didn't have the block of [Giacomo] Mancini, [Claudio] Signorile, not to speak of [Francesco] De Martino. Craxi wasn't able to do it. The transformation of a social democratic party into a liberal party isn't an easy operation; [Marco] Pannella always criticized Craxi for it. From a certain point of view, and in small proportions, he is able to do it today, organizing with [Enrico] Boselli and the old Craxians.

SCELSI: You hope for the fall of Berlusconi, but you have to admit that he is a mirror of the country, of its decline.

NEGRI: The situation is so debased that the only desirable thing is the rupture of the Italian political and institutional space. Due to this, I believe that the discourse on Europe can be fundamental. The work of modernization, what we can call today "a true and genuine reclamation" of the Italian constitutional fabric, is no longer conceivable within the material spaces of the constitution of 1948, not even when you think simply of small and secondary modifications. We need to accompany the transformation of the country with new institutions. We need to aim at a profound transformation and the construction of new possibilities of alliance between social and political forces. All this can't happen if we don't break the current determination of parliamentary political relations and of the elites, if we don't recognize, therefore, the consistency of the new constitutional material.

SCELSI: What do you mean by the rupture of the Italian constitutional space?

NEGRI: In the first place, the terrain of representation should be modified. I am convinced that a pluralism of democratic instances of the base can be expressed on the basis of a European federalist development. The large regions of north Italy have to confront, finally, directly, Europe. As in Germany, where the large regions have a public space completely different from that defined by the constipated Italian constitutional norms. We need to recalibrate the regional mechanisms in larger spaces and in all of Europe. We do well when we say that we don't say this due to irresistible reformist desire (even if there is a little of this). We refer rather to the fact that Europe could be the great occasion for reopening a process of radical social transformation. Europe is the only "country" in which great traditions of civilization are accompanied by great democratic experiences constructed from below. This is a vision of Europe in the current crisis of unilateralism of global relations. In a subsequent period, when global multilateralism is stabilized and aristocratic global representations are determined on a continental basis, Europe will become the only democratic mediator within this new global constitution. We need Europe because of this. It isn't so much a question of constitution, but of conviction that Europe is the only occasion for a pluralistic and democratic push of real and dynamic transformation at the global level.

SCELSI: We are in a phase of prerupture?

NEGRI: Here in Italy there is no rupture, there is the Vatican. We have always lived in a condition composed of geological stratifications . . . Sometimes I would prefer the transformation of Italy into a large tourist garden for the world, with special prices and open to all, the largest and most perfect Disneyland. However,

speaking seriously again, you could also imagine an alternative: the modification of the political classes, the reintroduction of the will of transformation.

SCELSI: Let's go back to Europe and its geopolitical role in the world and to the negative vote in France and Holland on the European Constitution. From what you say, there seems to emerge a favorable judgment on the approval of the constitution, with very different arguments from those used by the forces that wanted it to be rejected in France.

NEGRI: First of all, we need to make a geopolitical consideration. Whether the Right or the Left wins, the problem remains, at a global level at any rate, of giving a constitution to the globe, and not a unilateral constitution, seeing that the Americans have already lost regarding this attempt. The necessary plural constitution will not go by way of the UN but by way of the large continental realities. Europe is one of these, but it is also the most important in a cultural, monetary, industrial, and political sense. And therefore it is necessary that Europe assume this role. If Europe doesn't do it, nobody will. Among all the contradictions, Europe is the only force able to create polycentrism, perhaps with Russia alongside it (in the imaginary great European Gaullist space), and to impose real pluralism among the United States, China, India, and Latin America. Blind forces, nationalist forces of the Right and the Left lash out against this hypothesis.

And it is true that the proposed European Constitution is, on the whole, indecent, but its second and third part allow an intervention, despite everything.

In Holland, the anti-European vote was the Right's, against immigration and the mixing of races, while the French vote had

the nationalist socialist stamp of the Left. The friends of *Le Monde diplomatique* are in this sense the enemies; they think that national republicanism can be a substitute for globalization on the geopolitical plane. They read the process of globalization as a purely capitalist dynamic without any possibility of expression on the part of the multitude. History would stop, according to them, if globalization were affirmed everywhere. It's amusing to hear this said by those who affirmed that the socialist armies of a single country could spread the revolution throughout the world. Utter stupidities . . . Now there isn't a program anymore, but old nationalist and socialist models, one of the lowest points for the Left after Stalinism. In Italy we are studying these positions. Only a united Europe can construct a space in which the proposition of a truly revolutionary project makes sense.

—That was hard work, no, Raf?

—Hard work, but productive. We have thought about the category of the common, an effective new terrain for practical politics. You have individuated, in the question of governance, a space for possible action for the movements. And, finally, while we have been having this conversation, the movements in Europe have begun to reconstruct from the base what it was impossible to construct from above: a common political space. That doesn't seem like a lot to you?

—No, that's certainly something. Still, it is insufficient with respect to the potential that these years of struggle have accumulated. Sometimes I think that the adversaries are intelligent; they expect this potential to explode and they act with this awareness. They expect us to restore dialectical instruments of neutralization of the needs and desires of the multitude. In France, the trade union, though present in the struggles, gives a hand to the negotiation of the terms of the antagonism. I can't do it anymore, I'm tired. I have a relation with the real that throws me beyond this condition of continually reproposed oppression. When I speak of it with the many comrades who conduct the struggles, I hear myself saying that also for them the limit is here in order to be reached. With the philosophers it is

different: they always act on the margins, on terminology, on language rather than on the word, on time that flows rather than on the kairòs that emerges, that divides. They are probably correct, the philosophers, and we are mistaken, we who try to have the taste of the time and action. Still, there is an idea of the common that goes beyond all this, an idea that often carries us away, an idea that would often carry us away if we didn't know that it is itself the foundation of any productivity and of any expropriation. Enough. Now we should finish. Socialism has given us all that it could give us: another model for managing capital, another figure for being bosses. It is now possible to begin to think that to be productive can coincide with being free. It's a good step forward, don't you think?

This interview was completed in the days of the hard-won victory of the Center-Left Italians against the Center-Right Berlusconians. A sad and dark moment in national history or the obscure and foggy dawn of a new ethical and political experience?

LEXICON

by Raf Valvola Scelsi

Aznar, José Maria (1953–)

Spanish politician, prime minister of the Spanish Parliament between 1996 and 2004, a member of the Spanish People's Party (PP). Politically active from his youth in an organization close to Francoism, he subsequently changed to conservative and democratic positions. He was unexpectedly defeated in the political elections of 2004 following his decision to send Spanish troops to Iraq and due to his declarations immediately after the terrorist attack of March 11, 2004, in Madrid.

Bateson, Gregory (1904–1980)

One of the most important scholars of cybernetics and sociology of communication, and an anthropologist and linguist of the post-WWII period. At one time married to the anthropologist Margaret Mead, he developed a series of concepts that are among the most fertile in the field of philosophy understood in the widest sense, including the idea of the Double Bind and of Schismogenesis. Once involved in the theoretical work of the Macy Foundation, he inspired the establishment of the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto, which was subsequently known as the School of Palo Alto.

Bertinotti, Fausto (1940–)

Italian politician, secretary of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), and president of the Chamber of Deputies from 2006. From a socialist background, for many years he was active in the work of the CGIL, the most important Italian trade union, which has a strong communist and socialist presence. During his secretaryship he always looked with great interest to extra-institutional and alternative globalization movements, supporting the most pacifist positions.

Black Bloc

Journalistic definition used in order to define the anarchist and "movementist" galaxy characterized by practice of direct action. Its first appearance should be located at the end of the 1970s in Germany, in which organized stewards dressed uniformly in black actively boycotted the construction of the military airport in Frankfurt and defended the symbolic occupation of Hafenstrasse in Hamburg. Reappearing with other ideological characteristics at the beginning of the 1990s in the United States and in Europe, they assumed a controversial role in the chaotic days of protest against the G8 meeting in Genoa.

Cheminots

In colloquial French, the word "cheminot" is currently used in order to indicate the conductors of trains and more generally all those who work in the SNCF, the French state railway company. On many occasions, in the 1990s and also in this decade, the cheminots have been protagonists of hard trade union struggles, representing one of the active and organized sectors of the French working class.

Commons, the Common Good

The question of the common good is one of the great theoretical themes that have assumed an unprecedented centrality at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Historically, it can be subdivided into two large areas. On the one hand, the common good is understood as a common property of vital importance that is made their own by generally private subjects. This was the case of the enclosed land in England, beginning in the sixteenth century and lasting until the end of the eighteenth century: the so-called phenomenon of the enclosures. Similar cases are the privatization of a collective good like water, in Latin American countries or in India, or of noble metals and crucial resources, as happened in the course of the last two centuries—above all in the countries of the so-called Third World. On the other hand, more recently, the term common good has received a wider meaning. Common goods are also those instruments of labor and infrastructure that allow society to play an active role, such as software and tools of various types, the Internet (as appears in the work of Lessing and the Creative Commons), and others.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism means "to be or feel oneself to be a citizen of the world"; it is a word that derives from the Greek *kòsmos* (world) and *polítes* (citizen). The concept was already present in ancient philosophy, particularly in the doctrines of cynicism and stoicism: Diogenes, responding to somebody who asked him where he came from, responded that he was a "cosmopolitan." From the philosophical point of view, the doctrine was taken up again only much later, above all in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, so much so that it influenced the ideology of the French Revolution.

Cybernetics

A term invented in 1947 by the American mathematician Norbert Wiener, who derived it from the Greek *kyberm tik*, which means the "art of piloting." Cybernetics is the discipline that studies phenomena of self-regulation and communication, both in natural organisms and artificial ones. It is a discipline located at the crossroads of mathematical engineering and philosophical studies. Its result is the so-called "theory of information" of a mathematical type, which became the necessary theoretical basis for the birth of the computer.

d'Alema, Massimo (1949)

Italian politician, prime minister of the Italian Parliament from 1998 to 2000, and subsequently minister for foreign affairs. He was politically educated in the

Italian Communist Party (PCI) and was among the leaders of the party who pushed for the transformation of the Communist Party into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) in 1990, following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Diamat

Russian acronym used to indicate the conception of dialectical materialism (*dialekticheskij materializm*). It applies the philosophy of historical materialism, elaborated above all by Marx in the *German Ideology*, to the phenomena of nature. Engels, in particular in *Anti-Dühring* and the incomplete *Dialectics of Nature*, contributed to the development of this approach, individuating three fundamental laws: 1. the conversion of quantity into quality; 2. the interpenetration of opposites; 3. the negation of the negation. It is from Lenin in particular that the formulation of the concept of dialectical materialism is derived, in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. Stalin's *On Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism* imposed diamat as the "official philosophy" taught in the schools and universities of the Soviet Union.

Fordism

Term used to indicate, on the one hand, the peculiar form of production based principally on the use of the assembly line, and on the other hand, the extension of the productive model to the spheres of social reproduction. Thus, the adjective "Fordist" has been used in different ways, from indicating the modality of social organization of the life of working class neighborhoods to signaling the sphere of consumption as well. The term was theorized for the first time by Antonio Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks*.

General Intellect

Marx's concept appears in the *Grundrisse* (1858), centered on the idea that abstract knowledge begins, due to its autonomy from production, to be nothing less than the principal productive force, relegating piece work and repetitive work to a residual position. According to some scholars, among them Paolo Virno, the concept of general intellect is supposed to derive from the *Nous poietikos*, the Agent Intellect that Aristotle discusses in *De Anima*. The concept of knowledge, as principal productive force, is seen as the basis of the new postFordist mode of production.

Genoa

Genoa has a strong left-wing tradition and its mobilization has always signaled an historic moment in Italian events. Indeed, in 1892 at Genoa the Italian Socialist Party was established and it was once again at Genoa in 1960 that the longshoremen, the workers of the harbor, decided to mobilize against the authorization given by the government for the national congress of the neo-Fascist party *Movimento sociale italiano* (Italian social movement), initiating very rough conflicts (sometimes with the use of light arms) between demonstrators, the police, and the army, which led to the fall of the Tambroni government. Genoa is also the only European city where the Nazi army was arrested directly in 1945 by the partisan forces instead of by the allied forces.

Giolitti, Giovanni (1842–1928)

An important Italian politician who marked the political life of the country in a decisive way between the end of the nineteenth century and the period of the seizure of power by fascism in 1922. Of a moderate liberal orientation, he was among the first to concede political space to the socialists, involving their leader Filippo Turati, in an historical period in which the government strategy towards the opposition was one of simple repression. After a series of economic reforms that improved the condition of life for workers, at the beginning of World War I he lined up with "neutral" positions. The last of five governments led by Giolitti was in 1920, at the end of the so-called *biennio rosso* (two red years), distinguished by the occupation of the factories by the workers and subsequently the appearance of the violence of fascist squads. Giolitti did nothing to stop the actions of the fascist squads, maintaining that their violence could still be reabsorbed by the democratic system.

Hardt, Michael (1960–)

Professor of literary theory and political philosopher, Hardt teaches at Duke University. His most famous work is certainly *Empire* (2000), written together with Antonio Negri, with whom he has also written the subsequent *Multitude* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (forthcoming).

Income of Citizenship

In its most radical proposal, income of citizenship is a form of generalized and egalitarian economic intervention aimed at everybody. Income of citizenship means a monetary payment distributed at regular intervals to all those who enjoy citizenship and residency for a certain period of time, which allows a minimum dignity of life. It can be combined with other incomes (from labor, enterprises, savings), independent of the labor activity carried out, of nationality, sex, religious creed, or social position. It is paid to those of working age, for the period that goes from the end of obligatory schooling to pension age or death. Weak forms of income of citizenship have been hypothesized in order to build social safety networks, above all in order to allow the weakest strata of workers or those with contracts of precarious work to be able to guarantee their perspectives of a life with dignity.

Kairòs

Kairòs is a word that in ancient Greece meant the "just or opportune moment" or "time of God." The concept of *kairòs* had a crucial role above all in ancient rhetoric, among which was sophism, which emphasized with this term the capacity of the orator to know how to adapt himself to the variety of circumstance of the audience. All the meanings of *kairòs* are therefore linked to efficacy: it turns situations upside down, giving them their definitive results, and it is the condition of the successful action.

Koinè

The ancient Greek term *koinè* has often been used over the centuries to indicate any type of language shared by different cultures and peoples. In antiquity, the

same term was often used to indicate the presumed common language from which the various Greek dialects were supposed to have derived.

Lacandón Jungle

The Lacandón Jungle is in the state of Chiapas in Mexico. It is a zone of very high biodiversity that became famous for being one of the primary theaters of the action of the *Ejército Zapatista de liberación nacional* (EZLN). It was on January 1, 1994, the same day the NAFTA agreement came into force, that the so-called *Declaración de la Selva Lacandona* was issued, in which the existence of the EZLN against the Mexican army was publicly declared.

Local Egoism

A political concept that appeared in the middle of the 1980s in Italy, defining an economic–political tendency that favored certain local areas at the cost of the general interest. The birth of the concept is contemporary with the political rise of the *Lega Nord*, a political organization rooted in North Italy, among whose objectives is secession from the rest of Italy and, failing that, the local management of the taxes collected in the northern part of the country.

Montoneros

The Peronist Movement Montonero was an Argentinean guerrilla organization of the Left. It was active in the 1970s, against the paramilitary groups of the Right and apparatuses of repression of the Argentinean dictatorship, by which it was almost completely destroyed in 1977. The movement, originally composed of students, was the result of an encounter at the end of the 1960s between students of a Peronist orientation, Catholics, and those on the Left.

Penitentism (Pentitismo)

Penitentism (or collaboration with the authorities) is a situation in which a member of a criminal organization with mafia-like or terrorist goals provides, generally after capture, confessions and declarations to the authorities, such as to permit them to take adequate measures to combat and even to weaken the same organizations. In exchange for these declarations, the State guarantees strong reductions of the foreseen penalty. The phenomenon originated in Italy at the end of the 1970s, in relation to the participants in the armed struggle.

Piqueteros

Neologism that derives from the English word "picket." It appeared on the Argentinean political scene for the first time in 1996. The term has subsequently denoted the unemployed Argentinean activists who, during the explosion of the crisis under the government of Carlos Menem, occupied the factories and the productive businesses of the country, running them with an approach substantially based on principles of self-management.

Precariat

State or condition of precarious work. The concept originated in Italy in the 1970s

in order to define the non-guaranteed forms of labor in the education system; subsequently, it was extended in order to define *in toto* the multiple juridical forms utilized in post-Fordist production: labor agencies, flexible work, contract work, internships, atypical work, freelance workers, temping, and so on.

Primitive Accumulation

Called "previous accumulation" in Adam Smith, "Primitive Accumulation" is a key concept in the theoretical-historical elaboration of Karl Marx, developed in the XXIV chapter of the first volume of *Capital.* Primitive accumulation represents the point of departure of the capitalist mode of production. In criticizing the position of the classical economists, who saw primitive accumulation as the fruit of saving and the industriousness of entrepreneurs, Marx maintained instead that it was derived from the separation of the direct producers, transformed into wage workers, and the means of production, which, concentrated in the hands of the employers, was transformed into capital. The process of primitive accumulation was supposed to have begun in England between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, with the appropriation of vast areas of common land by the landed proprietors who needed pastures in order to meet the increased demand for wool by manufacturers. "This primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past" (Marx).

Radio Alice

Active in the years 1976 and 1977, Radio Alice of Bologna was one of the most important radio stations of the so-called "free radios" period, when numerous economic and political subjects decided to profit from the existing legislative hole by commencing their own transmissions. An expression of the so-called "creative wing of the movement," it was closed by the authorities in 1977, accused of having directed via its transmissions the actions of demonstrators in the course of the clashes following the killing in Bologna of the left-wing student Francesco Lorusso by the police.

Radio Sherwood

Radio Sherwood, established in 1977, is an independent radio transmitter that broadcasts throughout northeastern Italy. The station is run by a collective of students and "workers" of the area, many of whom are close to the positions of the organization of the far left *autonomia operaia* (workers' autonomy). Since its beginning, the station has been characterized by its proximity to the social movements. In recent years, it has become the spokesperson of social centers of the northeast and the movement of the so-called disobedients.

Sieyès, Emmanuel-Joseph (1748–1836)

Politician, essayist, and man of the French church. He actively participated in the French Revolution and had an important role in the *coup d'état* of Napoleon Bonaparte on the eighteenth Brumaire 1799. Among his writings is *Qu'est-ce que le tiers*

état? (*What is the Third Estate?*). He was famous for favoring a project that aimed to extend the principle of constitutionality to any act promulgated by all the organs of the State. According to some scholars, Sieyes was the inventor of the neologism "sociology."

Stadio Carlini

Stadium located in the eastern zone of Genoa where tens of thousands of people close to the *Tute bianche* and the disobedients camped in the days of the demonstration against the G8 in 2001. The use of the stadium had been authorized by the city council of Genoa.

Syncretism

The term derives from the Greek *synkrètismòs*, which literally means "joining together in the Cretan way." In general, syncretism means the fusion of mythological or religious or philosophical elements in a unitary totality, which doesn't always demonstrate a strong internal coherence.

Taylorism

A theory regarding management espoused by Frederick Taylor in his monograph of 1911, *The Principles of Scientific Management*. The theory is based on the introduction of scientific methods aiming at the analysis of individual functions of labor, broken down into their essential elements.

Tute Bianche (White Overalls)

Italian political movement active in the years from 1994 to 2001. It took inspiration from an initiative organized by an antiglobalization group in Milan, Ya Basta, and in the course of a demonstration called for the closing of a center of temporary detention for clandestine/illegal immigrants. Its spectacular characteristic was the use of white overalls, the use of instruments, many of them creative, for the defense of bodies from the blows of the police and the facemask, in order to prevent recognition. Its apex was reached during the days of the great popular protest against the G8 meeting in Genoa in July 2001.

Workerism (Operaismo)

Workerism originated at the beginning of the 1960s in Italy, in a historical period during which the debate within the European and Italian left was substantially ideological. The workerist approach is characterized by the idea of returning to the working class and its needs. The journal that started this methodology of political intervention was *Quaderni rossi* (red notebooks), directed by the left wing socialist and translator of *Raniero Panzieri*, the first volume of Marx's *Capital*. This journal had the undoubted historical merit of being the first to know how to read the transformation of the Italian working class underway in the 1960s, characterized by the figure of the mass worker. After the death of Panzieri, the workerist methodological approach found important places for debate in the journals *Classe Operaia* (working class) and *Contropiano*, which published the interventions of intellectuals such as Alberto Asor Rosa, Romano Alquati, Massimo Cacciari, Ser-

gio Bologna, Antonio Negri, and Mario Tronti. Tronti's book *Operai e capitale* (*Workers and Capital*) defined the fundamental terms of the concept of workerism.

Zapatero, José Luis Rodriguez (1960–)

Spanish politician, socialist, and prime minister from 2004. Architect of a large series of civil reforms, immediately after the elections he withdrew the Spanish troops from Iraq, subsequently promoting and supporting a law against violence against women, introducing quicker divorce procedures and a law to legalize assisted fertility. At the center of tough polemics, he further approved the law that allows homosexual couples to marry, a procedure that consequently also foresees the right of adoption of children. Furthermore, he favors the legalization of medical experimentation with cannabis.