



*Franco Angeli, Untitled, 1963*

## Translator's Introduction: The Victory of Defeat

Raffaele Sbardella is unknown to the English-speaking world, and even among Italian radicals he is an obscure figure.<sup>1</sup> If it nonetheless seems worth introducing him to the readers of *Viewpoint*, it is on the strength of the essay that we are presenting in translation below. "The NEP of *Classe Operaia*" is a rare bird: it is a critique of Italian workerism (or operaismo) from the left. We do not lack for critical perspectives on the later autonomist and post-autonomist theories of Toni Negri, Franco "Bifo" Berardi, Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, and others, whose work became more widely known due to the success of Negri and Michael Hardt's *Empire* trilogy in the 2000s. The wellspring from which this entire tradition draws, however, is the unorthodox conceptualization of class struggle, workers' autonomy, and capitalist development that took shape in the pages of the journals *Quaderni Rossi* and *Classe Operaia* in the early and mid-1960s. This earlier stage remains murky to all but a few specialists in the matter.<sup>2</sup> The workerist legacy is buried in the rubble of a cataclysmic defeat; there is much work still to be done simply to unearth its ruins. It may seem perverse to offer an attack on the mainstream of workerism - and especially one as withering and partisan as Sbardella's - when many of the foundational texts to which the essay makes reference are still unavailable in English. I have chosen to translate and publish the piece nonetheless because I am convinced that its interest exceeds the merely antiquarian.

Sbardella's intervention is historiographic: he aims to show that the later errors of the autonomist movement can be traced back to an ideology that took hold in the *Classe Operaia* group, and in particular in the work of its leading light, Mario Tronti. The essay itself is a document of defeat. Originally published in 1980, it was written in the wake of the Movement of '77 - the last great outpouring of Italy's decade-long "Creeping May" - and more specifically in the immediate aftermath of the Italian state's repression of Autonomia in 1979. By the time Sbardella was presumably writing, many of the movement's leaders were in prison (including, most famously, Negri), or had fled the country. But there was another and less painful exit available to erstwhile champions of workers' autonomy. It was a choice, moreover, that some had made as early as the mid-1960s. This was the decision to rejoin one or another of the existing parties of the working class and thus to abandon the extraparliamentary struggle to its fate. Such was the trajectory of Tronti - the primary target of

Sbardella's article.

If "The NEP of *Classe Operaia*" were concerned only to chastise an apostate it would be of little interest, of course. Fortunately, it has a broader agenda. Tronti had been a member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the 1950s; although he never technically left, he effectively distanced himself from it at the beginning of the following decade. At this time, he started working with Raniero Panzieri - who was affiliated with the Italian Socialist Party, or PSI, the Communist Party's major competitor on the left - at the influential journal *Quaderni Rossi* (Red Notes). In 1964, Tronti left *Quaderni Rossi* to co-found *Classe Operaia* (Working Class), whose contributors would include Negri, Alberto Asor Rosa, Massimo Cacciari, and Romano Alquati, among others. In 1967 Tronti was reconciled to the PCI. Between the prodigal's departure and return, however, he published *Operai e Capitale* (Workers and Capital), the first edition of which appeared in 1966.<sup>3</sup> This book effectively codified the major propositions of workerism: for instance, that the development of capital is largely a response to the self-activity of the working class, and that revolution is to be accomplished through the "strategy of refusal," in other words, by workers' withdrawal from capitalist production. Sbardella challenges some of these propositions. But he does so not in the abstract, refuting one after the other as if they were floating in the ahistorical ether. Rather, he aims to show his readers *where* these ideas came from - and, more importantly, where they led. For this reason, "The NEP of *Classe Operaia*" takes the form of a chronicle.<sup>4</sup> Or, one could say, a genealogy. Tronti's embrace of the PCI appeared to many workerists and autonomists as a blatant contradiction of his own arguments in *Operai e Capitale*. Sbardella's aim is to show that it was anything but. At stake are the philosophical underpinnings of workerism itself.

Sbardella's narrative begins *in media res*. The year is 1964: Tronti has already broken with Panzieri and other comrades from *Quaderni Rossi*; the rest of the action traces the rise and fall of *Classe Operaia*. Yet the basic shape of Tronti's politics has already congealed. It is founded on what Sbardella describes as an idealization of the concept of proletarian subjectivity. He aligns Tronti, unexpectedly, with the reactionary neo-Hegelianism of Giovanni Gentile, Mussolini's court philosopher. Gentile's imposing body eventually turned up riddled with partisan bullets on the streets of Florence in 1944 - an appropriate end to the thinker who championed the philosophy of

the “act,” in other words, brute power as the truth of dialectics. The point of Sbardella’s scandalous maneuver is to argue for a link between Gentile’s “actual idealism” and Tronti’s own workerist ideology. In his telling, Tronti’s theory of the invariable positivity of the proletarian subject meant that this subject’s actions could only be, ipso facto, correct. This was, therefore, an “idealism of the Subject” that amounted to an affirmation of what already exists: and thus effectively an affirmation – in a formulation that echoes Gentile – of the balance of class power at any given moment.

When the working class was, indeed, on the offensive, the effects of this idealism were, at least, innocuous. Borne along by the rising tide of struggle, workerism gave a new impetus to the project of conceptualizing the autonomy of the working class from its own reformist institutions. There was, at first, much talk of an entirely new and genuinely revolutionary Party to come – outside of, and against, the PCI. But Tronti’s philosophy refused to give the negative its due. Sbardella’s story picks up in the years of the “retreat,” or *riflusso*, of working-class struggles that occurred after the decline of an important strike wave in 1962. Suddenly, Tronti and his comrades faced the conundrum of explaining these setbacks without at the same time abandoning their thesis of the inexorable advance of proletarian power. Instead of building their own autonomous organizations, Tronti and others correctly observed that workers in this period were increasingly reentering their old and by this time rather toothless left-wing parties, above all the PCI. It was this phenomenon that demanded urgent explanation, since the very legitimacy of workerist analysis was at stake. Thus began a period of torturous realignment on the part of the *Classe Operaia* theorists: their positions shifted rapidly from the imperative to construct a new revolutionary party, to the call to prevent the social-democratization of the PCI (and thus to conduct the class struggle *within* rather than *outside* the Communist Party), to suggestions for various alliances with other forces of the left. This led, eventually, to abject submission to the PCI exactly as it was. After all, if the migration back to the PCI was a genuine mass movement on the part of the workers, it could hardly be simply wrong. Tronti’s later allegiance to the Communist Party was no anomaly, but was rather the logical consequence of his own workerist assumptions.

This is the core of the argument. Sbardella’s critique of Tronti is subtler than might first appear, however. Following an insight not only of workerism itself, but also of a much older left communist tradition, he recognizes the historical institutions of the

workers' movement as founded on expropriation. Classical parties such as the PCI indeed represent the will of the class, but only as separate and alienated from the class. Parties monopolize political subjectivity. Yet this does not mean that the pure unmediated activity of the class is therefore inherently revolutionary, as a certain naively left communist position would imply. On the contrary: when the class suffers material defeat, its strategy, too, is thrown into disarray. Workers then find themselves huddling around whatever concentrations of power still survive. In these circumstances, spontaneity leads to bad politics, not because workers lack direction from a proper revolutionary vanguard, but rather because the objective situation leaves them few other options. In such a period even the most impeccably committed cadres are only capable of organizing defeat. It is not the case, according to Sbardella, that an oppositional subjectivity always exists. It is rather constituted and deconstituted in the flux of the class struggle. For all their emphasis on class composition, the workerists around Tronti failed to recognize this fact.

Sbardella argues that Tronti and his comrades were hoisted on their own petard. Because they had idealized proletarian subjectivity as invariably revolutionary, they were unprepared to properly analyze the Italian proletariat's retreat into its own stultifying institutions. They were then left with no choice but to ratify this retreat as one more masterstroke of the proletariat's undoubtedly correct, if inscrutable, strategy. When the struggle in the factories began to heat up again at the end of the '60s, however, Tronti and his followers were blindsided once again. Having already declared the PCI to be the authentic expression of the workers' subjectivity, they were left with no way to respond to the new avalanche of defections. This accounts, Sbardella argues, for the emergence of Tronti's utterly mystified doctrine of the "autonomy of the political." If it was true that the workers had delegated their political will to the Party, then that Party implicitly would retain its legitimacy as the political expression of the class, even if - as indeed actually happened - that authority were to be turned against the class itself. What becomes autonomous here is not the class but rather its political representation. And this autonomization then has no effect other than to conceal, and to oppose, the real movement of the class.

Can one rightly say, then, that Sbardella's analysis is marked by an implacable opposition to the form of the party, which after all makes an appearance here only to alienate workers of their subjectivity? Not quite. The essay is peppered with references to



a properly revolutionary party-form, though this remains hypothetical. It would be an “instrumental party” subordinated to the working class rather than standing above it. Sbardella’s own political engagements do not suggest that he belonged to the left-most margin of Italian politics. He had, in fact, started out in the PCI in 1950s, before joining the *Quaderni Rossi* collective and, subsequently, the group that published *Classe Operaia* itself. His path was therefore extremely close to Tronti’s own, at least until the middle of the ‘60s. Sbardella at some point studied with the Marxist philosopher Lucio Colletti, during which time he began developing his own analysis of alienation and abstraction (the fruits of which are clearly to be read in “The NEP of *Classe Operaia*”). He then passed through the orbit of at least two small parties to the left of the PCI: successively, the PDUP (Party of Proletarian Unity) and Democrazia Proletaria (Proletarian Democracy). In the 1970s and early ‘80s he was also involved in the publication of the journals *Metropolis*, *I Quaderni del No*, *I Quaderni del CRIC* (the journal of the Centro di Ricerche e Iniziativa Comunista, or Center for Communist Research and Initiative), and finally *Unità Proletaria*. He also wrote books on the “critique of politics” and the eighteenth-century penal reformer Cesare Beccaria. At the turn of the twenty-first century Sbardella reemerged in the pages of the Italian Marxist journal *Vis-à-vis*, where “The NEP of *Classe Operaia*” was in fact republished.<sup>5</sup> He is still alive today, though evidently rather elusive.<sup>6</sup>

Though it would be irresponsible to speculate further, what this record at least suggests is an attitude of profound suspicion towards political representation that all the same does not reject the party-form per se. The errors to which Sbardella sees Tronti falling prey are, on the one side, an uncritical acceptance of immediacy and spontaneous action, and on the other side, an equally uncritical acceptance of political mediation as the direct expression of proletarian subjectivity. In fact the two errors are symmetrical – two sides of the same coin. This is an insight of relevance to situations somewhat removed from its point of origin. One of the more remarkable sections of the essay, for example, is a long footnote on Toni Negri. Sbardella acknowledges that Negri rejected Tronti’s increasing recourse to political mediation. Yet he did not thereby “succeed in overcoming and critically liquidating the idealism of the Subject.” Instead, Negri’s theodicy of revolt merely played a game of musical chairs, abandoning the classical proletariat (and its historical institutions) in favor of “whatever is still oppositional” – marginal groups or social figures that supposedly escape the grid of representation. Sbardella argues that Negri in fact ratifies the effects of

capital's assault on workers, and thus misrecognizes the decomposition of the class as a definitive break with the centrality of the productive sphere in the revolutionary movement. This is an incisive comment that has clear implications for Negri's later promotion of the "multitude" as a replacement for the industrial proletariat - as well as for any other premature identification of putatively new revolutionary subjects.

"The NEP of *Classe Operaia*" is of course embedded in the politics of its moment. Sbardella surely had in mind the "Historic Compromise" that had recently brought the PCI into an ultimately disastrous rapprochement with the conservative Christian Democrats. Indeed, the PCI was to dissolve completely little over a decade later. Parties in this mold are as good as extinct today, so it may be that Sbardella's animus will strike contemporary readers as passé. Yet the problems at stake are not endemic to the Italian experience of some thirty or forty years past. Sbardella ultimately proposes an alternative to the phantasmal opposition between "spontaneity" and "organization" that remains a prominent feature of debates on the left to this day. Neither pole has any revolutionary content in and of itself. As fetishes, both are capable of leading revolutionaries, lemming-like, over the cliff. The virtue of Sbardella's essay is to show how an incurable optimism with respect to the proletariat's revolutionary capacities (incurable pessimism might well have the same effect) can blind even the best and brightest to the real state of the world. And that state, needless to say, is bad these days.

I therefore offer this translation as a modest contribution to a future theory of the strategic significance of disaster.

- *Daniel Spaulding*

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## 1

The left has never seriously taken into consideration the philosophical matrices of Trontism and of the ideology of those comrades who, after the break with *Quaderni Rossi*, gathered around the review *Classe Operaia*: this is a fact. And also, of course, an error, because the *workerist* ideology of these comrades has spread through the movement mystifying readings of reality and political behaviors that are anything but adequate to the real levels of struggle. We have never seriously and critically taken into consideration the idealistic, or rather Gentilian<sup>7</sup>, nature of Tronti's thought; we have not emphasized with sufficient clarity the negativity of the absolutization of the idea of Subjectivity that he introduced and which continues to be the cause of considerable real failures in the movement.<sup>8</sup> The break with Panzieri may be fully explained only if we remember the idealistic and actualistic nature of Tronti's thinking.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the coherence and continuity of this author's thought, the non-contradiction between the theory of the "rough pagan race"<sup>10</sup> and that of the "autonomy of the Political," can emerge in all their dimensions only if the analysis succeeds in critically tracing this theoretical path. It is a continuity and coherence that in turn make the story of *Classe operaia* itself comprehensible: the exit, first, of the Genoese group, then the split and, later, the dissolution of the group of those comrades closest to the positions of Toni Negri. In this way it is possible to explain, with sufficient clarity, the refusal of mediations - within the same idealistic conception of the working class - that Tronti was gradually introducing into his political discourse in order to master the new reality of the "retreat" and to grant a subjective valence to that which was not subjective.

Many comrades are still convinced that the theses contained in *Operai e Capitale* remain scientifically valid and authentically revolutionary, and are to be opposed, not without embarrassment, to Tronti's current positions.<sup>11</sup> We, on the contrary, believe that, if we truly wish to construct a party completely immersed in the present composition of the class - a "party-instrument" which will have made its own both the *critique of politics* and the new behaviors and needs of collective subjects - it is necessary to seriously and theoretically reckon with the workerist ideology of *Classe Operaia*.<sup>12</sup>

After the break with Panzieri, and after the publication of the sole issue of *Cronache*



*Operaie*, the comrades who had left *Quaderni Rossi* found the review *Classe Operaia*, gathering and unifying around themselves various groups of political intervention and a number of regional newspapers. The last issue of *Classe Operaia* is published in March of 1967: the experience of this group will therefore take place during the years of the working class “retreat,” the “cold” years of the “conjunctural crisis.” The hypothesis according to which the working class’ attack on capital was permanent and growing in a linear fashion, and hence that the material conditions for the construction of a “new revolutionary party” were present – a hypothesis which was also formulated on the basis of a totally mystical conception of workers’ Subjectivity – very soon reveals itself as unfounded and not in correspondence with the negative reality of the “retreat.”<sup>13</sup> The groundlessness of this hypothesis causes serious difficulties for the group and, from the outset, negatively affects the regularity of the journal’s publication: the group does not grow, the organization does not mature and the working class does not reach the hypothesized levels of struggle.

The “political intelligence” of the journal is thus forced to progressively rediscover the “importance” and the “strength” of the historical institutions of the working class, to give new value to the *determinant* weight of the Political. With one clarification, however: that the political institutions of the class, due precisely to the a priori ideal represented by this mythical workers’ Subjectivity, are rediscovered not as what they are, namely as permanent sources of alienation for the class – as Panzieri rightly said – but rather as instruments which the class itself will succeed in conquering, controlling, and using positively in certain particular moments of its history.<sup>14</sup> Indicative of this failure is – as we have said – the progressive decline in *Classe Operaia*’s frequency of publication: there were, in fact, eight issues, as well as a supplement to no. 6, published in 1964; four issues and a flyer in 1965; two (one of which was a working report) in 1966; and only a single issue in 1967, after the definitive dissolution of the group had been decided at the end of 1966 during a national meeting in Florence held at the headquarters of the Giovanni Francovich Center.<sup>15</sup>

The first issue of the journal perhaps does not yet faithfully reflect the program that the group had given itself: as a matter of fact this first issue does not at all respect the immediacy of the ideal Subject that is at the foundation of the common political position of the various groups that converge in *Classe Operaia*.<sup>16</sup> Already in the first issue, the *Leninist* exigency of the “party” emerges as a priority: naturally, given

these theoretical premises, what really emerges is an “organicist” and exclusively political conception of the “party,” therefore a conception that, in the completely ahistorical and uncritical rediscovery of Lenin’s thought, considers the “party” to be the place where the Subjectivity of the class is incarnated. The Party, in short, is not presented as that which it is, with its historical characteristics of separation and alterity with respect to the class, but is rather identified with the class and totally confused with the workers’ Subjectivity – something that is of course absent from the thought of Lenin, who, on the contrary, knew very well that the “party” is “necessarily” external to the class.<sup>17</sup> With respect to the radical immediacy and the permanent activity of idealized Subjectivity, this most particular use of Lenin represents, even if covertly, a first logico-political mediation, or rather the first timid step towards the current Trontian discourse – the result, obviously, not of an *objectivist* conception of the class – as in Lenin – but of the ideal path of the same Subjectivity: the particular, concrete *acts* of the class, *all* of its manifestations (whether these are expressions of a real collective subjectivity, or the passive result of atomized objectivity, is of little importance), all of these, to repeat, are considered as real actions, strategic moments, of the permanent Subject which is the working class, or, more correctly, as moments of the manifestation of the Idea of subjectivity, or rather of the Spirit. Moreover, that the rediscovery of Lenin occurs within a *subjectivist* understanding of the class is well demonstrated by the fact that the “necessity of political organization” (which is for Tronti “definitively linked to the name of Lenin”) has as its general frame of reference a discourse which in fact reverses the methodological viewpoint of the Third Internationalist tradition: “it is necessary” – Tronti writes – “to reverse the problem, to change the sign, to start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the struggle of the working class.”<sup>18</sup>) It could not have been otherwise. The discourse of the “autonomy of the political” was necessarily born with “Lenin in England,” an article that if on one hand offered a first political mediation to the group, on the other laid the theoretico-political foundations of Italian workerism in the 1960s and ‘70s.

The economic-political system reacts to the workers’ gains in the first years of the 1960s with an “investment strike” and a “violent credit crunch,” but also with a political crisis and an intensification of repression so as to provoke a partial retreat and backtracking on the part of the movement. Let us not forget that the first interviews in which Agnelli announces and threatens mass layoffs date precisely from 1963.<sup>19</sup> 1964 was, therefore, a year in which the movement and the struggles of the workers

come to a partial stop and, confronted with the massive conjunctural attack, inevitably flow back into a space of waiting and resistance: “a retreat that in certain aspects recalls the dark days of the ‘50s.”<sup>20</sup> Panzieri, foreseeing all of this, coherently criticizes those who, on the contrary, were hypothesizing an uninterrupted continuity in the struggles. Not coincidentally, it would be precisely over the judgment of this phase that the Trontian group would break with *Quaderni Rossi*: this same idea of Subjectivity – subjectivity as *continuum* – does not permit the group to understand Panzieri’s analyses and to correctly register the reality in the factories and the temporary absence of the collective subject.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, a contradiction is already present in the first issue: if on the one hand this mythic belief in a permanent class Subject represents the warp of its discourse, on the other hand, it is forced to register, but at the same time to present as an expression of this mythic subject, the real working class’ moments of “retreat.”<sup>22</sup>) The autonomy of the struggles and the anti-constitutional characteristics of the new collective subject are exalted, but the reality of the relative “retreat” of the struggles becomes the object of a veritable ideological manipulation and mystification, a reversal of significance.<sup>23</sup>) The strategic point of view is reversed but at the same time taken for granted; it is presumed, in opposition to the Union and the Party, that the workers can “do it themselves,” but at the same time the necessary mediation of the “party” reappears – or rather, one uncritically places “Lenin in England.”

Naturally, in this first phase the proposed “revolutionary party” is supposed to be born *ex novo* from within the class itself, autonomously and “against” the existing party.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless the difficulties are not underestimated: “Organization” – Tronti writes – “is the most difficult point [...] as soon as you become institutionalized in a form you are used by capital.”<sup>25</sup> A problem, evidently, that Tronti himself was to underestimate, since it is precisely with this first issue of *Classe Operaia* (namely in the moment of what seems to be the highest consciousness of the negativity of political forms) that he initiates – as we have emphasized – the true path of the “autonomy of the political”: “This practical work, articulated on the basis of the factory, must, in order to function on the terrain of the social relations of production, be continually *judged and mediated* [emphasis added] by a political level that generalizes it.”<sup>26</sup>

It is precisely the two fundamental theoretical elements of this journal’s discourse –

hypostatized Subjectivity and the consequent concealment of the moments of the class' real objectivity - that do not permit them to grasp the historical-negative significance of the separation of political forms, the fact that they are, in any case, a source of alienation for the class: in fact, *in order to exist*, this Subjectivity has need at every moment - in reality, in the moments of the class' objectivity and passivity - of certain theoretical-practical mediations. The entirely political rediscovery of Lenin (the tactical Party) is therefore, within this discourse, a first mediation: in this case as well - as we have said - the separateness of the party one wishes to build is concealed in order to display it, in a way that mystifies reality, as a possible *instrument* in the hands of the workers' Subjectivity.

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But the birth of the hypothesized "party" is overdue; the factory organization does not generalize and does not offer the "party" the mass vanguards that it needs. And in this way there emerges in the second issue - dedicated entirely to Europe - a second mediation that is certainly more advanced and significant. This time the mediation is represented by the ironically critical interest that the journal addresses to the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), or more exactly to nos. 5-6 of *Critica Marxista*, which are dedicated to the question of organization and the Party.<sup>27</sup> The polemic is harsh, its verbal expression violent, but it nonetheless opens a new chapter in the brief history of *Classe operaia*. Let us pay attention to the following: "And at this point we stop [...]. We leave gossipy cries of joy to the bourgeois newspapers. All of this is right for them, and for their bosses. It is never right for the workers to be politically disorganized on principle"; from this one recognizes that the class without the PCI is "politically disorganized."<sup>28</sup> Compared to the hypothesis of the construction of a "new revolutionary party," this critical interest, but also this evident preoccupation with the separation of the Party from the class, represent a real - and sudden, one could say - reversal of the political line that had emerged in the first number of the journal. This turn, obviously, is not itself causal: it is in fact the historical result of the meeting of Trontian ideology - ideal Subjectivity - with a real phenomenon, namely that of the tendential and progressive "reentry" of the vanguards of the struggle into the historical formations of the workers' movement.

It is in fact precisely in this period of "retreat" in the struggles and of the atomization

of the collective body of the class that the workers themselves, forced to delegate their unitary *will* to the existing party, jumpstart the expropriative mechanism that transmits their *capacity-to-will*: a mechanism that only apparently seems to reconstitute a positive link between the working class and *its* institutions – given that *consent* always presupposes the division and passivity of the masses, and hides their political alienation behind a precisely represented, abstract, and separated Unity.

The group notes the reestablishment of the representative relationship and the “reentry” of the workers into the PCI with extreme promptness, but the absolutization of workers’ subjectivity, which does not permit them to grasp these same phenomena at a level beyond simple empirical appearance, paradoxically forces the group members to see in the mechanical and passive product of the class’ objectivity and atomization an organic, collective, and rigorously conscious “choice” on the part of the workers in struggle.

In the March issue, Toni Negri, with a brief, synthesizing editorial, attempts to shore up the discourse of *Classe Operaia* on the irreducible opposition between workers and capital, conceiving the problem of alliances as the “bloc of the working class with itself, the block of the working class against the class adversary.”<sup>29</sup> He aims to radicalize Tronti’s hypostatized discourse *from the left*. There is no doubt that this editorial represents a first clear resistance to the new discourse on the institutions of the workers’ movement that is beginning to penetrate and circulate with ever greater insistence within the group. This initial resistance is nevertheless defeated with relative ease: issues 4-5, 8-9, and 10-12 of the review will be dedicated to deep and expanded analyses related to the question, ever more crucial, of the Party and the Union. Tronti writes:

The imbalance between wages and productivity is a *political* fact, and should be understood as a *political* fact and be used politically [...]. In these years the workers’ use of the *labor union struggle* has in fact surpassed and defeated the capitalist use of the union, today it is therefore necessary to drag along the old organizations.<sup>30</sup>

Immediate, too, is the reaction of the Turin group and of all those comrades who par-

anticipated more closely and attentively in the struggles of 1962. The supplement to issue no. 6, “dedicated to the workers’ struggle at Fiat,” which circulated essentially at Turin but was also present as an insert in the national edition, responds with extreme severity:

Today our first problem is this: we must make a clean break with the period in which we let the union do as it would, and we must build our organization to carry forward our class struggle against capital [...]. The new party of the working class will not be born out of any of the currently existing parties, nor will it be the result of one of their unifications or disintegration, but will be the fruit of a long experience of handling struggles: all the organizational forms developed in the struggle will flow into it.<sup>31</sup>

In the editorial of no. 8-9 – part of which is devoted to the problem of the “party” and the PCI – Tronti responds polemically, definitively clarifying his position:

The time is ripe, at the level of the class, for a direct discourse on the conditions of the workers’ movement [read: PCI] in Italy: now is the moment to open a debate, to conduct an analysis, to commence a precise political action on this terrain. Do not forget [Tronti observes] that the PCI still maintains a real relation to the working class. [... Therefore] let us say that today it is possible to choose the way that passes through a *positive crisis* of at least a part of the old organizations. This immediately clears the ground of the danger of starting over with the building of a new bureaucratic structure.<sup>32</sup>

The critical tone present in this issue is, nonetheless, still quite harsh: the journal forcefully denounces the progressive diminution, between 1950 and 1962, of the number of workers enrolled in the Party, and the paralyzing “gap” between members and voters.

It is – as we have emphasized – precisely in this period that the thesis according to



which the working class would not know what to do with yet another failed minoritarian experience begins to circulate and spread through the members of the group: now, it is said, the class prefers to transform the existing Party, “in a revolutionary sense”; it has chosen to “bring the PCI back into the factory” and there to use it for its own revolutionary ends. That the struggles suffer a relative setback, that the *organic character* of the real collective subject shows signs of atomization, that the workers are divided and opposed to each other, mediated by the abstracting presence of commodities and thus forced to alienate their own political will in representative institutions: all of this is evidently of little interest, or rather is set aside or presented as its exact opposite. In short, the not-immediately evident fact that the workers, due to a temporary defeat, are forced to alienate themselves in the PCI, in order *in some way* to recover their lost unity, is passed off as the coherent result of the collective subject’s free choice.

In this way the promise to dedicate more space and attention to the problem of the “party” was duly kept. The December issue will in fact be entirely dedicated to the PCI. It is only with this final issue of 1964 that the political shift clearly emerges with all its practical implications: thus we too have arrived at the problem of the party, or really, of the PCI.<sup>33</sup> Tronti criticizes himself: “This immense work will be collective, or will not be; it will succeed in immediately meeting the daily movements of the social mass of workers, or will remain blocked in itself, will stagnate, and will turn backwards.”<sup>34</sup> This may even seem to be a just demand, but, as we know, the other face of idealism is the uncritical acceptance of *vulgar empiricism*, or rather of the real data assumed acritically: indeed, if the “daily movements” of the workers are in reality equivalent to their atomistic and alienated movement in the direction of the PCI, then it is inevitable that the historical encounter with this “social mass of workers,” once the negative characteristics of this trend are concealed, can only happen within the PCI itself. Lenin is abandoned in England, with few regrets, while the PCI is rediscovered in Italy. For now, the *workers’ rediscovery* of the PCI is critical, and the workers’ decision to “enter” it presupposes – so it is believed – a clear revolutionary will: the “party” must be transformed and bent to the “subversive” needs of the workers. “The workers’ use of the communist party” is not peaceful; it is a use that profoundly transforms that which is used. This thesis – which presupposes, as one can easily see, a Subject that is *always* provided with consciousness and its own strategy (a thesis that the facts will also very soon blatantly contradict) – therefore places on the agen-

da the “immediate blocking” of the process of social-democratization that has affected even the PCI. “The tactic of the party [Tronti writes on this point] today rests on the illusion that it suffices to know capital in order to understand the working class”; with this approach one inevitably falls into the error of having to “adapt the organizational instrument of the party to the necessities of the development of capitalist society.”<sup>35</sup>

The great mediation represented by the autonomy of the Political is still far off; the viewpoint still remains directly tied to workers’ subjectivity; the methodological reversal remains that of the first issue; the claim that it is the development of capital that can be explained by the development and growth of workers’ subjectivity and their struggles do not undergo significant transformations. The thesis now maintained is that, if on the one hand the working class *wants* the development of capital, on the other hand it does not want to adapt itself to its political expressions; it wants to preserve its autonomy with respect to political processes that occur within the sphere of the state and are under the sign of capitalist power. The “political” subordination to capital is the true limit, the classic error of reformism, and therefore must be defeated within the PCI without delay. The development of capital must be pushed forward, just as the workers want, but the Party, even if it is a “workers’ party,” must not adapt or submit itself to this same development, must not become a political function: the Party, while capital forces it into development, must make sure to remove power from the hands of the capitalist class; it must, in short, destroy capitalist command over the whole of society. To succeed in doing so it is sufficient – again according to Tronti – to possess the “viewpoint of the working class”: capitalist development plus “workers’ power,” this is the Italian NEP of the ‘60s that the Trontians hypothesized and proposed in this period; this is the only possible path for the revolution in Italy. What is missing, however, is a “party” that firmly possesses the workers’ viewpoint. The workers themselves will come to realize that the ambiguities of the PCI are to be exploded by the workers themselves, who, for this very reason, will reenter the party en masse.

Consequently, in the article “Classe e Partito,” which is signed by Tronti, there exists a conception of the party that is revolutionary only in terms of content, or better, only imaginarily revolutionary: for this author, in fact, it is *sufficient* that the PCI should change its political line, acquire a *workers’* nature and culture, that it liqui-

date its “populism” and become active in the factory, because it is indeed ultimately capable of transforming itself into a truly revolutionary “party.” Totally absent from this discourse is a critique of the structural separation of the existing Party, of its representative nature, of the alienating nature of political mediations; totally absent is a critical connection between the separate form of the PCI and the reformist content of its political line. This entire critical discourse rotates around the simple observation that the PCI lacks a “coherent” class culture. Not, therefore, workers’ struggles and self-organization plus a party that knows to remain strictly their instrument or appendage, that knows how to defeat every tendency towards statification within itself; but rather struggles “within” capital and as a function of its development plus more power firmly in the hands of the workers’ “party.” Thus the workers supposedly enter the PCI not to destroy the separation, or indeed the source of their own alienation, but instead only to overthrow the ideological view and to impose their own class viewpoint. It is hence not a matter of putting back on its feet an alienating and pacifying organizational structure, it is a matter only of introducing into it, *as it is*, the proper class culture and viewpoint. The principle error of Togliatti’s Party was not that of having constructed a mechanism similar to the state in order to expropriate the political will of the masses, but instead only that of having identified politically and culturally with a historical bloc “until it disappeared into it, until it became the party of all the people.”<sup>36</sup> Therefore: to the class, “strategy”; to the party, “tactics.”

In the first issue of 1965, the choice of the field is further explained and developed: “For the entire year this section of the journal will remain open to discussion about the party.” This time it is Alberto Asor Rosa who clarifies which party is at stake: “Beyond the *single party*, but also beyond the new party, the bonds that hold the working class to *its party* are slowly, laboriously, and tirelessly being discovered.”<sup>37</sup> The review’s discourse now turns to the “communist cadres in the factory,” who are assigned the task of exploding the “clique” of reformist bureaucrats and of taking the reins of the “party” in order to decisively bring it back into the factory, and there to connect it with the “workers’ capacity to struggle”: “these workers’ political cadres potentially exist both inside and outside the PCI. In this sense the political work must necessarily extend to the level of the workers’ official institutions.”<sup>38</sup> In the same number of the journal, Romano Alquati, in an article on the internal structure of the class that is rich in stimulating intuitions, adheres to the group’s new political course; he writes:

Today it is anything but negative to valorize the potential tactical capacity of the militant, in relation to the class and the communist party - its subjective capacity linked to a real presence. It is a political force that is now very important, that has already borne fruit by raising the problem of the militants, throwing it in the face of the party's reformist direction.<sup>39</sup>

Toni Negri, on the contrary, prefers not to enter directly into the merits of the polemic and, bypassing the obstacle of the PCI, publishes in this first issue of 1965 a long and interesting essay on Lenin and the Soviets. The purpose of this discourse is clear enough, even if it is presented indirectly: the Lenin of the Soviets is opposed to the Lenin of the NEP; *rupture* is opposed to *continuity*.<sup>40</sup>

The "party in the factory" will be the central theme of the third issue in 1965: "The Call to the Third Conference of Communists in the Factories" proposes to use this political occasion to "impose the following choice. The choice is: either the workers' party in the factory, or a unified socialist party. To say no to the single party is easy. We must say yes to the class party."<sup>41</sup>

"This time the workers' cadres will both provoke and prevail in the clash between the PCI's reformist strategy and its revolutionary tactics."<sup>42</sup> [?!]

### 3

In the final issue of 1965, after the "workers' conference" and with the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>43</sup> around the corner, Tronti further develops his reflections and begins to worriedly speculate whether the slogan "Block the process of social-democratization; the PCI in the factory in the workers' hands" might still have a certain validity and practical function: "What is difficult here is not the words. What is difficult is the work."<sup>44</sup> The discourse of the "party in the factory" and "workers' control of the party" takes a backseat and fades considerably: "We have said: either the single party or the party in the factory. Let us take a step forward and say: party-class unity against social democratic unification."<sup>45</sup> This is undoubtedly a step forward with respect to the contents expressed in the October issue, where indeed everything had fallen into the

problematic of the “party in the factory.”

Tronti, evidently, begins to perceive the quality of the workers’ “command” or “use” of the PCI; he begins to perceive the workers’ passive attitude within the party, their lack of impact on its political line. All of this, naturally, without however succeeding in passing beyond the threshold of appearances, and thus without realizing that this passive attitude and this lack of impact are the specific product - at least within the Party - of the representative mechanism that also rules the internal life of the organization and the formation of political will. What Tronti is unable to recognize and to understand is the fact that the non-transformative presence of the workers within the Party depends essentially on their external atomization, and thus on their individual isolation and on the passive presence within its interior to which the party consigns them. And it could not have been otherwise, given that the Party, as a representative institution, has as its basis of existence this same atomization of the class, and is therefore one of the causes of this atomization: within itself, the party cannot abide anything other than individual workers whose own political will has been expropriated and thus made passive, or rather made into a simple transmission belt for bringing the political line decided at the top to the generality of the class. The Party’s interior spaces are the kingdom of passivity, the specific location where the Political becomes Subject and the real subject becomes the predicate of its predicate. But this passive presence of the workers, into which the leaders effortlessly pour their generic political contents, must be absolutely exorcized: as we know, the Idea of subjectivity - the idealism of the collective subject - is not able to tolerate this in any way.

For now, however, these perplexities remain circumscribed and indeed pass unnoticed. As a matter of fact, on the occasion on the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference - the first after Togliatti’s death - the *Classe Operaia* group will publish and distribute among the workers a pamphlet whose basic lines still gesture towards the struggle around social-democratic unification and the revolutionary “use” of the PCI, or really of the “party in the factory”: it invites the workers’ delegates to conduct a politically clear and open battle at the congress with the aim of breaking up the reformist leadership. At the end of May 1966, practically all of the local groups of *Classe Operaia* continue to operate with this political hypothesis and to use these slogans for their political interventions in front of the factories - when confronted with reality, however, those slogans, being dictated as we have seen by purely ideological motives, begin to

reveal their internal weakness and political inconsistency.

The first issue of 1966, which does not arrive until May, registers the failure of these slogans definitively and without entrenchment. Asor Rosa takes stock of the situation with extreme lucidity. He writes:

The first observation is that the debate before and during the Congress did not succeed in creating a *true* left [...]. The episodes of “resistance” are infinite. None of these have exceeded the level of the section. [...]. There is no doubt that the birth of a *true* left within the PCI has failed.<sup>46</sup>

So goes the line of Tronti, who, in the editorial of the very same issue, condenses and synthesizes it in the slogan: “united front against social democracy.”<sup>47</sup> What now counts most is political unity to the left: no longer the “party” in the hands of the revolutionary workers nor “party-class” unity – which had nonetheless represented an overcoming of the slogan of the “party in the factory”; now what counts is unity on the left of institutions of the workers’ movement against the unification of the PSI and PSDI [Italian Socialist Party and Italian Democratic Socialist Party].<sup>48</sup> All efforts must aim at the unification between the PCI and PSIUP [Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity]:<sup>49</sup>

This logic imposes an ever-more vast and organic acquisition *by all* of the principle that the “socialist transformation” of the country will not happen without open dialog with the other democratic forces of the left. PSIUP cannot, as such, reject this perspective.<sup>50</sup>

## 4

In October the last issue of 1966 comes out (the flyer): it contains a long analysis of this phase; the polemic is directed not only against PSIUP, which rightly opposes,



with strong resistance, the thesis of a merger with the PCI, but also within the group, and specifically against those “who already see as equals the PCI, as it is, and the social democratic forces that have only just become unified.”<sup>51</sup> In the first half of October a flyer is distributed in various places in the North (particularly in the Veneto and Emilia) which exalts the struggles and the high level of conflict that the workers have expressed, and in which the definitive social-democratization of the PCI is already taken for granted. Today the position of these comrades seems more correct than ever. Intransigent struggle against the liquidators; the “party” in the factory functioning to unify the workers’ struggles; no hint of the purely political unification of the PCI and PSIUP proposed by the Roman group:

By now the PCI has lost sight of the substance of the capitalist relation of production, which is exploitation [...]; Isolate and strike social democracy wherever it appears: in the unions, in the socialist parties, and also and above all in the Communist Party.<sup>52</sup>

The last issue of *Classe Operaia* appears in March 1967, after the decision to dissolve as an organized group had been made at a national meeting held in Florence at the Giovanni Francovich Center: the decision to dissolve as an organized group – and in this way to avoid falling into the old errors of the historical minoritarianism of the groups to the left of the PCI – is the clearest evidence of just how bankrupt the hypothesis of the “party in the hands of the workers” had shown itself, and conversely of how unchangeable the PCI had proven to be. The thesis of “unification to the left,” once it had been detached from real struggles, is forced to live on and articulate itself exclusively within the political sphere: in this way, every critical judgment on the PCI collapses and the ultra-minoritarian practice of entryism is rediscovered. Tronti’s farewell, in the editorial of the last issue, verges on the ridiculous:

Now we are leaving. We do not lack things to do. A monumental task of research and study courses through our head. And politically, with our feet again on the recovered ground, it is a matter of gaining a new level of action. It will not be easy.<sup>53</sup>

From within *Contropiano*, after Toni Negri's definitive break, the "recovered ground" – the "continent" of the PCI (now taken *as it is*) – would be observed with increasing attention, admiration, and respect.<sup>54</sup> In this way the "new level of action" would be quite easily achieved with the official reentry of the group into the PCI (Mario Tronti and Aris Accornero had never left it). After officially joining PSIUP, Alberto Asor Rosa and a few others would go on to promote a merger. A party game? The fact remains that in the early months of 1967 the first issue of *Classe e partito* is distributed at the University of Rome, a journal – we read – "elaborated and composed almost entirely by comrades in the PCI and FGCI [Communist Italian Youth Federation]," under the direction of Claudio Colaiacono – an ironclad Asor-Rosian – and aimed primarily at the Roman base of the PSIUP youth federation:<sup>55</sup> "Our discourse is therefore born from a direct experience of the PCI and FGCI [...], it is the discourse – we believe – that may interest those sectors of PSIUP who are also searching for real unity at the base."<sup>56</sup> In this period Asor Rosa is therefore searching for proper bargaining power, an area to hegemonize. It is not by chance that, one year later (the first issue of *Contropiano* appears in this same period), a notice informs the readers of *Mondo Nuovo* that Asor Rosa, "who has recently joined PSIUP [...], resumes his collaboration with our weekly in the article that we are pleased to host in this issue."<sup>57</sup>

This disenchanted transmigration of *Classe Operaia* into the historical parties of the workers' movement was itself easy to predict. In fact the workers' struggle against the reformist bureaucrats does not succeed, as had been suggested, in bringing the "party" back into the factory; during the "workers' conference" the communist leaders hint at self-criticism and partly succeed in defusing dissent. Aris Accornero attempts to limit the effects of the polemic that the Party, in view of the congress, had decided to launch against the group (or is this rather a wrong move on the part of the group itself?); Emanuele Macaluso instead harshly attacks the *Classe Operaia* group, denouncing from his own working class basis the adventurism of its "falsely workerist" discourse.<sup>58</sup> At the congress, then, the political line of the Party succumbs to yet another twist to the right and passes, after the defeat of the "left," to the thesis of the "failure of the center-left." Thus, after the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, the slogan of mass workers' entryism into the PCI, or rather into the "party in the factory," will fully display its idealistic and fanciful nature. But even in this case a mystification is still operative – as we have already emphasized: this *action* on the part of the workers is not taken as evidence of failure, as the occasion for a self-criticism capable of uncovering

the deficiency and ideological abstraction of one's own analyses; the workers' passivity in the PCI is not taken for what it is, but is rather as always transformed, from the heights of the workers' ideal Subjectivity, into a brilliant new move on the part of the working class. Now - it is said - the workers do not want to enter the PCI in order to *revolutionize it*, that is, to change its culture and internal nature; now they enter the Party with the specific aim of utilizing it *as it is*. In this way, the workers' *defeat* - their defeat *within* the Party - is read, paradoxically, as the umpteenth triumphant move of a working class that is believed to be permanently active and on the attack. With this new stunt, the presence of Mediation emerges definitively and in all of its dimensions. From this moment the ballet of surreptitious mediations and interpolations emerges into the light of day: now it is completely visible. It is not by chance that, again in Florence, Mario Tronti will affirm that the group's political limit manifests "in the *immediate* application" of the thesis of a strategic reversal between class and capital: "today we instead find ourselves faced with the need to find certain *concrete mediations* in the application of this guiding principle to the history of the workers' struggles."<sup>59</sup> The becoming-visible of Mediation coincides as well with Tronti's "passage" to a more openly Hegelian problematic, to an apparently more consistent "object and objectivity." In this manner the final issue of *Classe Operaia*, which had appeared a few months before, suddenly becomes obsolete: the slogan "No to social-democratic unification - unity of the left to leave open the possibility of a clash between workers and capital" is totally abandoned. Now, it is possible for Tronti to hypothesize that "a stretch of road (may) be laid jointly by the working class and capital," and thus that it is possible to hypothesize a long period of capitalist development in the presence of a political power in the hands of the *workers'* party, but - this is the novelty! - *as it is or even as it may become*:

When I speak of the party [...] I clearly do not refer to the PCI such as it is, but also to a possible general social democratic solution to the organization of the workers' movement [...]. Tactics does not exclude any solution.<sup>60</sup>

In short, there is nothing left of the struggle against social democracy: now the workers appear to have acquired the capacity to utilize everything, even social democracy itself.

Rita Di Leo – Tronti’s most faithful follower – in this period often likes to repeat (taking Tronti’s discourse to the extreme, perhaps out of a love for paradox) that even within the PRI [Italian Republican Party] it might be possible to do fruitful work *for* the working class: as we know, the Spirit incarnates itself everywhere, in all things, without any restraint.<sup>61</sup>

## 5

In his 1971 postscript to the second edition of *Operai e capitale*, Tronti, following the consistent logic of his discourse, makes the sensational discovery that “American politics of yesterday (could) be our historical present of today.”<sup>62</sup> The New Deal, therefore – again according to Tronti – may have been a political state of affairs that the workers imposed on the bosses: “the great capitalist initiative was a victory for the workers.”<sup>63</sup> Roosevelt’s entirely political action – the profound transformation of the separate sphere of the Political – is therefore the *positive* result of the working class struggle, a result that the working class had consciously pursued: “the truth is that the Weberian conception of totally and exclusively political action could perhaps only have been fully applied from the workers’ point of view.”<sup>64</sup>

Thus does the form of pure politics finally come to light – the positivity of exclusively political action, in short the primacy of the political struggle: only that in each of these figures, within, namely, the various articulations of modern political alienation, Tronti discovers every time, by divinatory means, the presence of the working class (or rather, of the workers’ Spirit), in short the workers’ Will, which, according to Tronti, is able to functionalize for its own ends all of the existing political articulations of Power without worrying in the slightest about their class character or alienating nature. But this *direct* relation between the working class and the political sphere, or rather this *immediate* use of Mediation, is above all imaginary and thus doomed to vanish when faced with reality.

In 1968-69, new struggles explode that show no sign of flowing back; instead they extend and generalize themselves ever more, attacking, with their destructive charge, not only Capital and its State but also – and this is the point – the representative institutions of the workers’ movement. At this point Tronti finds himself in a truly embarrassing situation: compelled by the preceding low ebb in the struggles and

working-class passivity during the years 1964-66, he was forced to partially correct the logic of his discourse in order to preserve intact his ideal Subject; he was forced to rediscover Hegel in order to bring into the open the effective presence of Mediation. Now, however, that the owl of Minerva has taken flight, it is suddenly day, and the night reveals itself to have been the effect of a simple eclipse. But the owl cannot stop or turn back, it can only close its eyes and continue its flight into the imaginary darkness of *its own* night. In short, this relation of *identity* between class and Party, and (*mediated* by the party) between class and State, is thus condemned, by the intensity and by the new quality of the social struggles - and in the first place by the practical criticism of the Political - to break off and wrap itself in ever-more paradoxical contradictions. But we ought not to be surprised: paradoxicality represents the most natural progression for an idealist mode of thought - such as, precisely, Tronti's.

The years 1968-72 - those five long years of exceptional workers' and social struggles - will definitively break that link of identity, or rather the *immediate* instrumental relation of "Politics," and will finally produce in Tronti's mind the rather original thesis according to which "Politics" (and in particular the Party) are entirely "autonomous": autonomous even from the working class itself, from its struggles, from its subjectivity, from its interests and needs.<sup>65</sup> Now the "class" - it is presumed - concedes full autonomy to its "party," liberating it even from the too-tight bonds represented by its own struggles and its own real movement: the "class" treats its own subjectivity and its own struggles with contempt, as particular moments deprived of real importance. The real movement is now pure appearance, and the "party," on the contrary, is the real substance of the "class." Now the Party can also dispense with the *apparent* reality of struggles. Now the "class" only *indirectly* "pulls all the strings." The "party," now that the "class" has granted it full autonomy, may calmly oppose itself to the workers' struggles, may calmly suppress them, inasmuch as it knows itself to be, *in any case*, the most authentic *expression* of the "class"; it is the *expression, all the same*, of its most intimate Truth.

## 6

Now, however, spurred by recent events and by the widespread reemergence of the real movement, and under attack from the massive criticism of the Political mounted

by new collective subjects, under attack from the crisis of credibility that is racking the PCI, Tronti gives the thesis of the “autonomy of the Political” a twist, apparently to the left. In reality it is a matter (as always) of a consistent development of his thought, of a further conceptual articulation of the thesis of the “autonomy of the Political”: when the Spirit is rigorously *immanent*, it possesses the capacity to traverse every reality while conserving in the new that which it has moved beyond, thus firmly preserving, with every new step, its own identity. What is important is the mobility, the restlessness of this Spirit that at all times must prove itself capable of possessing and dominating everything new that emerges from the real: every “new” reality that emerges – Tronti writes, significantly – “must not displace, must not foreclose, namely, the defense of the already done, the already said.”<sup>66</sup> It must not foreclose, for example, the defense of the “autonomy of the Political” – the “already said”; if anything, it should rather compel us to search for richer articulations and further developments of this thesis: in short, it should compel us to find a way to preserve the past through change. The emphasis seems to be newly placed on the immediate identity of class and Party: in reality this new step in Trontian discourse represents – as we will soon see – an even more refined way to preserve the autonomy of the Party *from* the class; to preserve, exactly, that mediation, represented by the concept of “autonomy,” that allows the (workers’) Spirit, even in the presence of a real movement, to yet again incarnate itself in the Party, or rather to ideally identify itself with it.

“The practice of mass politics, its recovery by the class, the direct appropriation of its political functions by the workers, is” – Tronti writes – “an achievement that must be wrested from this society:” although this step is rather generic, it appears, in some respects, to be a correct description of what is stirring in the movement.<sup>67</sup> In reality, on closer inspection the concept of the “political” utilized here is extremely ambiguous and already contains in itself all of the separateness that characterizes the political Sphere of Representation. There is a radical difference between the political will of the masses and social subjects and the political Will of the Party and the State: the latter is in fact equivalent to the alienation of the first. The first will is concrete because it is lived, in a non-alienated way, by the collective subject, the second is abstract because this subject is separate and is itself a source of atomization and passivity. Thus, to affirm, as Tronti does in repeating Schmitt’s lessons verbatim, that the “Political” is not exhausted in the State, but is rather present outside of it among



the mass movements as well, without clearly distinguishing between these various moments of the “political,” and, to the contrary – given that the concept of “autonomy” must certainly persist – continuously confusing non-representational *politics* with representational Politics: this is pure nominalism, a real ideological swindle that is equivalent, in effect, to an apologia for the world of fetishes and the concealment of real social subjects. In Tronti’s discourse, in fact, the “process of the distribution of the political, the entry of new social forces into the political, the birth of new political subjects,” are formulations that conceptually contain in themselves the ambiguity of referring at once to the real movement and to the representative institutions, such as, for example, the parties of the workers’ movement.<sup>68</sup> In other words the ambiguity lies in the fact that for Tronti the “entry into the Political” of “new social forces” resolves, for the latter, as a real mortal leap into Representation. Indeed, if there is a “need to make strategy, a will to look into the distance, a revolt against the day-to-day routine that rises from below,” is this not perhaps the same as saying that the *need* to alienate oneself in the separate organization of the Party rises *from below*?<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, for Tronti the “new political subjects” do not indeed represent the new movements born from within the social, but rather those political parties which are, or will be, those movements’ representation. And Tronti himself confirms that this is so when he writes that “alongside the State there have appeared other stakeholders, other *subjects* [emphasis added] of political reality, in the form of the parties.”<sup>70</sup> It is thus clear that “this achievement,” which for Tronti must be “wrested from this society,” is unthinkable with this subject that is the Party; or rather it seems to be precisely this Subject that, in the name of the masses, directly practices the reappropriation of the “functions of the political.”

These are the steps, then, in brief: in a first moment, the Spirit, by objectifying itself in the Party, makes the Party identical to itself. After this, having registered the class’ opposition to the Party, it renders the Party autonomous from the class of which it is, exactly, the Spirit. Thus autonomized, the Party now makes the “needs” of the real movement mystically emerge anew. In other words, in Tronti’s later writings, the return of the *Identical* is not indeed equivalent to the overcoming of the Party’s autonomy, but is rather its consistent development: that is, its development towards being the Spirit that is identical to the Party, but which is also mediated, in its identity, by the same Party’s autonomy. This autonomy, in its own turn, no longer appears to oppose the real movement of the class, but rather now appears to recon-

cile and to *reunite* the movement to itself, thus recovering its proper legitimacy.

Thus, with this magisterial *tourniquet*, the PCI is once again saved, and the real movement once again concealed.<sup>71</sup>

*This essay was originally published in the review Classe, no. 17, June 1980. The translation is based on a reprint in Vis-à-vis, no. 8 (2000): 172-88.*

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1. Both the present introductory essay and the translation that follows have benefited from exchanges with Marco Schulz (who first alerted me to Sbardella's text), Harrison Fluss, and Jason E. Smith. ↩
2. Steve Wright's book, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002) is the most complete account of the development of workerism that has been published to date. It is worth mentioning that Riccardo Bellofiore and Massimiliano Tomba's afterword to the Italian edition of this book agrees in some respects with the analysis found in Sbardella's much earlier essay (available as "[On Italian Workerism](#)," on libcom.org). ↩
3. No full English translation of this book yet exists, although French and German versions were published in the 1970s. ↩
4. The title refers to the Soviet New Economic Policy that was inaugurated in 1921. The NEP marked a transition from the period of War Communism to a partial reintroduction of capitalist relations in the USSR; it therefore stands here, figuratively, for *Classe Operaia's* compromise with the enemy. ↩
5. The entire run of *Vis-à-vis* is available at <http://web.tiscalinet.it/visavis/arretrati.htm>. ↩
6. I am grateful to Riccardo Bellofiore for confirming the biographical details in this paragraph. ↩
7. On this point, see our "Gentilismo e tradizione idealistica nell'esperienza politica di 'Classe Operaia,'" in AA.VV., *Le maschere della politica la rivoluzione possibile*, ed. Ottaviano (Milan, 1979). ↩
8. One thing must however be said clearly: that in the face of the passive objectivism of the Third

Internationalist and Togliattian ideological tradition, these comrades forcefully posed the problem, even if in an idealized form, of the primacy of collective subjectivity and of the relations of production, demonstrating the possibility of another reading of social reality. (the new class composition, the mass worker, the factory-society relation, the new characteristics of capitalist development, the political character of wage struggles, the struggle against “work,” the need for communism, etc). *Translator’s note*: Palmiro Togliatti was the leader of the Italian Communist Party from 1927 until his death in 1964. ↩

9. Explanations that do not take account of the fundamental dimensions of this theory are inevitably condemned to partiality and necessarily lose their political efficaciousness. See on this point: Viotto-rio Riese, “*Quaderni rossi*,” “*Rendiconti*,” no. 10, 1965; also, Mario Valente, *Ideologia e potere* (Turin, 1978). ↩
10. *Translator’s note*: Tronti used the phrase “rude pagan race” to describe the proletariat in his article “*Estremismo e riformismo*,” *Contropiano* no. 1, 1968, 51-58. ↩
11. Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966). Significant, here, is the position of those who, while having autonomously elaborated the most important themes of workerism, today choose the easy path of exclusively historical-chronological reconstruction, avoiding in this way the difficult task of critically rethinking their own theoretical-political experience. See on this point: Sergio Bologna, “*Così visse e morì Potere Operaio*,” *il manifesto*, March, 25, 1979. Do not overlook, however, the subsequent clarifications contained in “*Contro la strategia della confusione*,” *il manifesto*, April 11, 1979. ↩
12. *Translator’s note*: The term “partito-strumento,” which I’ve translated as “party instrument,” defines the party not as instrumental in end but as an instrument itself, thereby further disavowing any tendency toward the autonomy of the political apparatus from the struggle that articulates it. ↩
13. “The historical characteristic of the class situation in Italy is shown in the *open* form that the struggle assumes in all situations and on every occasion [...]. The anti-capitalist political capability that is present in the working class everywhere where capitalist production exists is here expressed in the *continuously* [emphasis added] aggressive form of direct confrontation. *This characteristic is not diminishing, but has rather grown and become more radical.*” [Emphasis added.] (“*Intervento politico nelle lotte*,” *Classe Operaia*, no. 6, June 1964. ↩
14. See on this question: Raniero Panzieri, “Lettera a Mario Tronti” (December 12, 1960), in *Scritti, interventi, lettere* (Milan, 1973), 283. ↩
15. In effect the March issue (no. 2) may be considered a working report, being an issue of only four

pages. It is largely dedicated to the workers' struggles in Milan and Turin that had exploded in the month of December. "Against the articulated struggle, the general strike": this was the key slogan contained in this report. The flyer dedicated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Communists in the factories was published in May as a supplement to issue no. 2. The October issue was published as a double issue, although it had fewer pages compared to the numbers of the previous year. ↩

16. This is a contradiction that is also expressed in the ever-more oligarchic and separated conduct of the journal. Given that the source of every decision was made to coincide with the workers' Subjectivity, which is thought to automatically express its own strategy, the initial project presupposed decentered moments of elaboration that would be autonomous and directly managed by the workers. The sole issue of *Cronache Operaie* partially reflects this program. At the turn of the '70s, *Cahiers de Mai* would realize this program with greater success. *Translator's note: Les Cahiers de Mai* was a French journal that began publication immediately after the events of May 1968 and ran until 1974. It was characterized especially by the practice of workers' inquiry. ↩
17. Lenin, in fact, by virtue of his objectivist understanding of the class, is able to keep hold of the qualitative differences that exist between class and Party. Or rather: in Lenin, the class is absolutized as a passive object, and the Party is considered the only true Subject. Therefore: what a strange "Leninism" is Tronti's! Not understanding the particularity of this Trontian reading of Lenin's works, Lapo Berti, for example, let it slip into a (logical) trap of perspective; he sees, in Tronti's first editorial, the birth of the "autonomy of the Political," but not as a logico-political articulation within a *subjectivist* concept of the class, but rather - this is the point! - as the coherent result of an exclusively objectivist conception. This is a paradoxical result, and we think that it serves to safeguard the old workerist conception of the class as a *continuum*, which is exactly that of Tronti and which he never really abandoned. See, Lapo Berti, "L'idea del potere," *Aut Aut*, no. 169, 1979. ↩
18. M. Tronti, op. cit. A hypostatized methodological reversal which provokes a radical refoundation, but with the same historical-sociological ideal: "The discourse of *Classe operaia* in '63 opened on a strategic perspective; in it the 'global unification of markets' and the 'plan of capital' were seen as historical expressions of complex social capital and were discovered to be the product of a *continuous* [emphasis added] development of the working class." (M. Tronti, "Si pianifica solo la contrattazione," *Classe operaia*, no. 4-5, 1965.) This is an idealism that absolutizes the real fact of development as the capitalist response to the workers' struggles, while remaining entirely in the dark about the other fact, just as real, of the class as a historical formation *determined* and made passive by capital. "What one gathers [as Panzieri rightly said, recalling the words of a Spanish anarchosyndicalist] is that capitalism lives by autosuggestion." (R. Panzieri, "Inediti," *Quaderni Piacentini*, no. 28, 1967. ↩
19. See: AA.VV., "Capitale e classe operaia alla Fiat, Seminario sulla composizione di classe," held at the Giovanni Francovich Center, Florence, 1978. *Translator's note*: the reference is to Gianni Agnelli, a Fiat executive and head of the company from 1966 onward. He was perhaps Italy's most promi-

ment industrialist during the turbulent years of the 1960s and '70s. ↩

20. Emilio Reynieri, "Comportamento di classe e nuovo ciclo di lotte," in *Problemi del movimento sindacale in Italia 1943-73*, "Annali" della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1974-75. ↩
21. Let us remember here that Tronti, precisely in the editorial of the first issue of *Classe operaia*, writes: "Today it is urgently necessary to shake off this air of workers' defeat [...] Today the workers' totally clear strategic vision makes one suspect that only now are we beginning to experience the hour of their splendid maturity." M. Tronti, op. cit. ↩
22. Hypostatized subjectivity - this permanent subjectivity - is very clearly expressed in the following passage: "Now, everyone must know that from at least June 1848, though cursed a thousand times by the bourgeoisie, the workers have climbed onto the scene and *have never since abandoned it* [emphasis added]: they have voluntarily chosen, from time to time, to present themselves in different roles, as actors, as prompters, as technicians, as workers, waiting to descend into the audience to attack the spectators." (Ibid. ↩
23. The working class "has discovered or rediscovered the true secret which will condemn its class enemy to violent death: the political capacity to skillfully impose reformism on capital and to crudely utilize it for the workers' revolution." (Ibid. ↩
24. Tronti in fact writes: "Lenin in England is the search for a new Marxist practice of the workers' party." ↩
25. Ibid. ↩
26. Ibid. Thus, as early as this first editorial, the *workers' Spirit* - this ideal subjectivity - incarnates itself in the figure of the Political, and, through it, shows one of its infinite faces: "It is political discourse" - Tronti writes, significantly - "that must verify the correctness of particular experiences: and vice versa. Because political discourse is, on this basis, *the total viewpoint of the class* [emphasis added] and therefore the real material datum of this same real process" (ibid.); here this confusion between class (materiality) and Party (Politics) is newly presented. ↩
27. At issue is an unsigned article entitled "Critica marxista del Partito?" in *Classe operaia*, no. 2, February 1964. *Translator's note: Critica Marxista* was founded in 1963 as the theoretical journal of the PCI. It still exists, having suffered only a short break in publication following the collapse of the PCI in 1991. ↩

28. Ibid. ↩
29. T. Negri, "Operai senza alleati," *Classe operaia*, no. 3, March 1964. ↩
30. M. Tronti, "Vecchia tattica per una nuova strategia," *Classe operaia*, no. 4-5, May 1964. ↩
31. "Lottiamo per la nostra organizzazione," *Classe operaia*, supplement to no. 6, June 1964. ↩
32. M. Tronti, "1905 in Italia," *Classe operaia*, no. 8-9, September 1964. ↩
33. With this issue the participation of the Genoese group also comes to an end. ↩
34. M. Tronti, "Classe e partito," *Classe operaia*, no. 10-12, December 1964. ↩
35. Ibid. ↩
36. Ibid. As regards the critique of the populism of the communist matrix, see also: Alberto Asor Rosa, *Scirttori e popolo*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1964. *Translator's note*: the term "historic bloc" derives from Antonio Gramsci, whose works were regarded as canonical within the postwar PCI. The concept refers to an alliance of social forces that successfully exerts hegemony. ↩
37. A. Asor Rosa, "Partito nuovo, partito unico, partito di classe," in *Classe Operaia*, no. 1, February 1965. *Translator's note*: in this context, the phrase *partito unico* refers to the proposal to unite the Italian parties of left into a single, broadly social democratic rather than revolutionary party. ↩
38. A. Norfi, "Manca l'organizzazione di classe," *Classe Operaia*, op. cit. ↩
39. Romano Alquati, "Una ricerca sulla struttura interna della classe operaia in Italia," *Classe Operaia*, op. cit. ↩
40. On this point see: T. Negri, "Lenin e i Soviet nella rivoluzione," *Classe operaia*, op. cit. ↩
41. "Sì al partito di classe," *Classe Operaia*, no. 3, May 1965. In early July of 1965, on the occasion of a national metallurgists' strike to be held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of that month, the Torinese group distributes a flyer under the headline "Il Movimento di Classe Operaia." Here one reads that: "The Communist



Party is not composed only of managers (even if up to the present they have always made all the decisions); there are also worker militants. And it is these that we address ourselves." "As of now, the party in the factory may function if the working class leads it to these perspectives" - this is written in another flyer that the Tuscan group distributed in November with a view to the deadline for the metallurgists' contract, under the heading "Classe operaia," Florence-Pisa-Livorno, and dated November 1965. The "Circolo operaio" is a direct emanation of the Roman group (Tronti, Asor Rosa, Di Leo, Coldagelli, De Caro, etc.): "On the initiative of a group of militant comrades in the political and trade union organizations of the working class, the "Circolo operaio romano" [Roman Workers' Circle] was constituted," reads a mimeograph from March. In June the first working report is published and circulated, under the title "Lotte operaie e programma capitalistico" [Working Class Struggles and the Capitalist Program]. Also in June they organize a debate held at the Teatro dei Satiri on the theme "Partito unico e partito di classe" [Single party and class party], with interventions by Giorgio Migliardi (FGS [Federation of Young Socialists] of PSIUP [Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity]), Claudio Petruccioli (FGCI [Italian Communist Youth Federation]), Lucio Colletti and, as always, Mario Tronti. *Translator's note:* The FGS was the youth organization of the Italian Socialist Party (POS). PSIUP was a leftist split from the PSI that existed from 1964 to 1972. The FGCI was the youth organization of the PCI. ↩

42. Rita Di Leo, "Operai e PCI, Storia di un rapporto difficile," *Classe Operaia*, op. cit. ↩
43. *Translator's note:* The 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Italian Communist Party took place in January, 1966. ↩
44. M. Tronti, "Una sola unificazione tra classe e partito," *Classe Operaia*, op. cit. ↩
45. Ibid. ↩
46. A. Asor Rosa, "Le ambguità si chiariscono," in *Classe Operaia*, no. 1, May 1966. ↩
47. M. Tronti, "Fronte unico contro la socialdemocrazia," *Classe operaia*, op. cit. ↩
48. On this point, see also: M. Tronti, "Non è l'ora della socialdemocrazia, è l'ora di batterla per la prima volta da sinistra" (transcript of the Conference held in Florence, April 2, at the Giovanni Franchovich Center), *Classe operaia*, op. cit. ↩
49. *Translator's note:* the PSDI, or *Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano*, split from the PSI in 1947. The PSDI did in fact merge with the PSI in 1966, but the union would last only two years. PSIUP was founded as a split from the PSI in 1964. For the most part they favored cooperation, but not merger, with the PCI. Following a poor showing in the 1972 elections, a majority of PSIUP mem-

bers left to join the PCI, while a minority would go on to found the *Partito di Unità Proletaria* (Party of Proletarian Unity, or PdUP). ↩

50. A. Asor Rosa, *Classe Operaia*, op. cit. ↩

51. “L’alternativa alla socialdemocrazia: unificazione a sinistra,” in *Classe Operaia*, no. 2, October 1966. ↩

52. The flyer is dated “Porto Marghera-Bologna, October 15, 1966,” and signed “Potere operaio and the Venetian-Emilian editorial board of *Classe Operaia*.” *Translator’s note*: a number of groups calling themselves Potere Operaio, or Workers’ Power, formed in various parts of Northern Italy in the mid- to late-’60s, although the unified group of this name was not officially founded until 1969. *Potere Operaio* leaders in the Veneto included Toni Negri and others involved with *Classe Operaia*. The group disbanded in 1973.] To reread it today is to be surprised by its lucidity and capacity to foresee, even then, the tendency that now prevails within the official workers’ movement. See also the flyer entitled “La tregua è una trappola” [“The truce is a trap”] (the requested truce between Intersind [*Translator’s note*: an organization representing Italian public sector enterprises] and Confindustria [*Translator’s note*: Italian employers’ federation]; the flyer signed “gruppi di azione proletaria,” [Group of Proletarian Action] “Potere operaio,” Padua-Porto Marghera-Vicenza-Porto Marghera, is dated May 20, 1966; and the flyer “Compagni” (a response to a PCI flyer which severely attacks the group *Potere operaio*), entitled “Potere operaio,” Venetian editorial staff of *Classe operaia*, dated Porto Marghera, May 30, 1966, in which one reads the following: “If this organization of the class vanguard is missing, the entire working class will necessarily find itself - when the push to struggle for contracts, without political guidance, is exhausted - without a political guide, without its own political force.” After the chemists enter the field, another mimeograph is circulated (a document of four pages), also entitled “Potere operaio,” signed by the Venetian editorial collective of *Classe operaia* and dated October 7, 1966. Among other things, we here read that: “The existence of a mass social democratic party guarantees at least this fact: the isolation of struggles at sectoral levels, in revindicative, unionist terms. European experience clearly teaches us that. At this time the working class has no weapons other than the political growth and effective generalization of the struggle.” ↩

53. M. Tronti, “Classe, partito, classe,” *Classe operaia*, no. 3 (in reality, no. 1), March 1967. ↩

54. In the same issue of *Classe operaia* in which Tronti attempts to focus on the boundaries of the “new continent,” Negri concludes his article thusly: “What are the forms through which the international working class threatens capitalist development? This is the new scientific question, the new horizon of both knowledge and organization.” In Toni Negri, “Cronache del ceto politico,” *Classe operaia*, op. cit. *Translator’s note*: *Contropiano* was published from 1968 to 1971. Numerous members of *Classe operaia* continued to work together at *Contropiano*, among them Tronti, Negri, and Asor

Rosa, although Negri would break from the group after the first issue as a result of disagreements with Tronti.

A major political insight? It would in fact seem so. In fact, while Tronti completely abandons the specific level of struggles and of the social, as well as the analysis of the tendencies at work within the given composition of the working class, in order to make an entirely politicist choice and a totally acritical discovery of the historical institutions of the class, Negri intuits the meaning of that social magma that was expressed at the turn of 1967; he intuits that the struggles are about to start again and that the collective subject is about to reemerge. The definitive rupture would nevertheless come in 1968, when, riding the wave of the May struggles, Negri once again poses, against the Lenin of the NEP, the Lenin of the revolutionary “rupture,” the Lenin, that is, who situates the rupture “in that particular but necessary moment of development which is the crisis [...]: here [writes Negri] the break is necessary and possible [...]. And it is this Leninist experience of the break that is retrieved in the theoretical experience of the working class.” (T. Negri, “Marx sul ciclo e la crisi,” *Contropiano*, no. 2, 1968.)

Unfortunately, Negri’s polemic, due to the philosophical matrix of his thinking, does not succeed in overcoming and critically liquidating the idealism of the Subject. What Negri really criticizes and rejects is the passage, operative in Tronti, to a “dialectical” logic closer to that of Hegel and more available to political mediations and compromises with reality *as it is*; what he rejects, in sum, is the tauto-heterological moment of the interpenetration of opposites (which effectively, if not critically controlled, permits and justifies all sorts of practico-political operations). What results from this is a sort of (Kantian?) logic of separation and of real opposition ideally applied to history and to the struggles of the working class. A logic that itself has need, nonetheless, of a political *mediation*. And thus, in the case of Toni Negri, the mediation is still quite obscured behind the identification of Party with class: “Lenin,” as in early Tronti, is completely confused with the *will-to-rupture* (the hard struggle “against work”) on the part of the class, the “party” that, while maintaining its characteristics of tactical direction, and as the “necessary” subject, is ideally made identical with the general mass of workers. In Tronti’s case, on the contrary, the mediation is, now, entirely visible and the identity between the class and the Party is realized through its contrary, and thus by means of an ideal and therefore arbitrary dialectical leap. What must now be *identified* are two realities – the workers and the PCI – which, when they are not actually opposed to each other and openly in conflict, are nonetheless linked by a relationship of separation and alienation: in this case one would apparently surmise that the working class, in order to recover its “tactical articulations,” would be disposed to “utilize” the PCI through a series of self-negations and mediations. The divergences can no longer be silenced and recomposed. *Contropiano* publishes, at the end of Negri’s article, a brief statement with this notification to readers of the break that had occurred: “Due to substantial differences related to the political positioning of the journal, Toni Negri is leaving editorial staff with this issue.” The development of Negri’s thinking after the hot years of the struggle and within the real crisis of workers’ subjectivity will lead this author more and more to privilege (in a Foucaultian manner) all of those social realities external to the workers’ subjectivity which express themselves in the mode of irreducible opposition. We think that this *logic* has been one of the sources of all those political errors into which vast sectors of *Autonomia Operaia* have fallen in the last few years.

In fact, when the class is atomized and forced into the condition of passivity, the idealism of the Subject, once the logico-political mediations of the Trontian type have been rejected, is compelled to transfer its own attributes somewhere else, namely into those places where it can still incarnate itself *in whatever is still oppositional*. And it is thus that these characteristics, at first attributed to the united and active mass of the workers in struggle, become predicates either of the small fractions of the class that are still active but separate from one another, or of other “subjects” or social figures active solely in the sphere of the Abstract, or rather completely disconnected from the signifying structure of the System; or, even, of those vanguards constituted in “parties” which are completely disconnected from the concrete condition of the masses. Inevitably, this transmigration of the Spirit conceals the working class as a point of reference that is *still* central, just as it conceals the production process as the site for the formation of revolutionary subjectivity. What counts now is only the *relation* of “dominance”; and this relation emphasizes by contrast the “new revolutionary subjects.” To the effects of the disintegration of the productive fabric, decentralization, unemployment, and the marginalization of vast social sectors, one acritically affixes a positive sign, thus placing oneself in the position of not being able to identify the real positive tendencies of recomposition and the new unitary behaviors that, beneath the surface, are passing through the negative. When the negative is presented as positive, we are in the presence of a passive reflection of the crisis of the central revolutionary subject; we are in the presence, therefore, of a theory that, having been acritically constructed on the basis of the real disintegration induced by the class enemy, can do nothing other than present all the characteristics of subordination: in certain respects it also represents an apologia for the (economic and political) power of capitalism. Even if these theories indicate and interpret (though still distorting the meaning of) current tendencies or behaviors that are destined to contribute to the new composition of the class, they are nonetheless ideologies doomed to be swept away by the class itself when, recomposing itself as a unitary subject, it restarts a new cycle of struggles. On this point, see: T. Negri, *Proletario e Stato*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1976; and also, *Dominio e sabotaggio*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1978. Do not forget, however, Franco Piperno, “Sul lavoro non operaio,” *Preprint*, supplement to no. 0 of *Metropoli*; and also Oreste Scalzone, “Rapporto sullo Stato del movimento e i suoi nodi da sciogliere,” *Preprint*, op. cit. This last article in particular, although it still remains within the usual hypostatized logic of ideal subjectivism, nonetheless has the merit of limiting its references to “non-working class labor” and of partially bringing back the “working class refusal of work” to the movements of the class proper, or to that which is defined as “communism in progress”; it has the merit (even if the results are somewhat confused and at times even paradoxical) of not refusing an open and shut confrontation with the *critique of the Political* and with all those practical behaviors which have been expressed most recently as the collective reappropriation of the class’ own political will. ←

55. *Translator’s note*: the *Federazione Giovanile Comunisti Italiani* was the PCI’s youth organization. ←

56. *Classe e partito*, no. 1, November 1966. The second issue, in reality a working report, comes out in March of 1967. ←

57. A. Asor Rosa, “Da qui agli anni ’70,” *Mondo Nuovo*, no. 17, April 1968. *Translator’s note*: *Mondo*

*Nuovo* was a PSIUP publication. ↩

58. Emanuele Macaluso, "Partito e classe operaia," *Rinascita*, no. 45, November 1965. The article in question contains a scathing response to two letters, sent to Giancarlo Pajetta, the director of the communist weekly, in defense of the positions of *Classe operaia* that are criticized in Accornero's article. Aris Accornero, "'Operaismo' sterile," *Rinascita*, no. 42, October 1965. In this article certain of *Classe operaia*'s positions are correctly reproduced and extensively quoted, while others are harshly criticized. The polemic contained in this article thus appears to be directed not so much to the positions of *Classe operaia* as to those of Mario Tronti, and to the political positions that Toni Negri had expressed in the article of issue no. 3, 1964, entitled "Operai senza alleati." ↩
59. M. Tronti, "La nuova sintesi: dentro e contro," contribution at the *Seminar on class composition*, organized by the "Giovanni Francovich" Center, mimeograph, later published in *Giovane critica*, no. 17, Autumn 1967. ↩
60. Ibid. ↩
61. *Translator's note*: the PRI is a centrist liberal party. In these years it was generally in alliance with the conservative Christian Democrats. ↩
62. M. Tronti, *Operai e capital*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Einaudi, Turin, 1971, 311. ↩
63. Ibid., 292. ↩
64. Ibid., 281. ↩
65. The theme of the "Autonomy of the political" appears for the first time as a central theme in the report Tronti held on the occasion of a meeting held at the University of Turin, December 5, 1972. The mimeograph document that appeared several months later contains, among other reports, Tronti's discussion and conclusions. Edizione Feltrinelli would later publish the whole of it in 1975, with the addition of a second report and a brief introduction. On this point, see, by the same author, *Hegel politico*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Rome, 1975; "La transizione," in AA.VV., *Stato e rivoluzione in Inghilterra*, Il Saggiatore, Milan, 1977. ↩
66. M. Tronti, "Politica e potere," *Critica marxista*, no. 3, 1977. ↩
67. Ibid. ↩

68. Ibid. ↩

69. Ibid. ↩

70. Ibid. ↩

71. In reference to this last rethinking, see also: M. Tronti, "La sinistra e la via di una ricerca comune," *l'Unità*, September 26, 1978. ↩