

Antonio Gramsci 1925

Maximalism and Extremism

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Comrade Bordiga is offended because it was written that there is much of maximalism in his concepts. This isn't true and can't be true – Bordiga writes. In fact, the most distinctive trait of the extreme left is aversion for the Maximalist Party, which it finds revolting, which it detests, etc, etc.

But this is not the question. Maximalism is a fatalistic and mechanical conception of Marx's doctrine. It is the Maximalist Party which draws arguments for its opportunism, which justifies its disguised collaborationism, with revolutionary phrases drawn from this falsified concept. The red flag will triumph because it is fated and ineluctable that the proletariat will win. Marx said it, and he is our kind and gentle teacher. It is pointless for us to act: what is the good of acting and fighting if victory is fated and ineluctable? This is the way the maximalists of the Maximalist Party speak.

But there is also the maximalist who isn't in the Maximalist Party and is instead in the Communist Party. He is intransigent and not opportunist. But he also believes that it would be pointless to act and struggle day after day; he is only waiting for the great day. The masses – he says – cannot but come to us, because the objective situation is driving them to the revolution. And so let's wait, without all these stories about tactical

maneuvers and like expedients. This for us, is maximalism, exactly like that that of the Maximalist Party.

Comrade Lenin has taught us that in order to defeat our class enemy, who is strong, who has many means and reserves at his disposal, we must exploit every crack in his front and must use every possible ally, even if he is uncertain, vacillating or provisional. He has taught us that in a war of armies you can't attain the strategic goal, which is the destruction of the enemy and the occupation of his territory, without having first attained a series of tactical objectives – which aim at breaking up the enemy – and then confronting him in the field.

The entire pre-revolutionary period presents itself as one of primarily tactical activity, directed at acquiring new allies for the proletariat, breaking up the enemy's offensive and defensive organizational apparatus, and detecting and exhausting his reserves. Not taking account of this teaching of Lenin's, or only taking account of it theoretically without putting it in practice, without making it become daily activity, means being a maximalist, that is, speaking grand revolutionary words while being incapable of taking a step along the road of revolution.