Revolution, nation and peace[1]

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1

The ideal of perpetual peace, of a world that is definitively liberated from the plague of war, does not characterize exclusively the contemporaneous conscience, but does not lead us to very ancient times either. We can say that it goes back, fundamentally, to the struggles that preceded and succeeded the French Revolution. From that moment on, the reflection on peace is enriched by two radically new elements. It starts to be considered in Universalist terms. In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the ideal of the "perpetual peace" still concerns explicitly to Europe, or to "the Christian States":[2] those that sign the treaty banning war forever are the representatives of the Christian powers, which are, this way, enabled to face more effectively the menace of the "Turkish", of the "Africa corsairs" and of the "Tartars", and which, by repelling the eventual aggressions coming from that side, can even find "occasions for cultivating military genius and talents".[3]

The other element of novelty is that, always beginning from the struggles that preceded and succeeded the French Revolution, the ideal of the perpetual peace ceases to be presented as a vain hope, and takes on a precise political dimension: now the political action is that is called to perform the ideal at issue. Now it is about detecting and attacking the forces that have interest in the war, and those are identified with the feudal system and the monarchic absolutism. Aiming at the cabinet wars of his time, Voltaire (2006, chap. VII) states that, in order to eliminate the periodical massacres between nations and men, it would be necessary to punish "those sedentary and slothful barbarians who, from their palaces, give orders for murdering a million of men, and then solemnly thank God for their success".

Rousseau (1959, p.593), in his turn, states that "war and conquest on the one hand and advance of despotism on the other hand give each other mutual support". The war, then, fixes its roots not in the alleged wickedness of the human nature, in the original sin, but in the concrete, established political-social institutions. Rousseau does not hesitate in drawing every consequence from this formulation. Given the existence of forces interested in the war, the resort to the revolutionary violence is inevitable: so, "in default of such spontaneous agreement, the one thing left is force; and then the question is no longer to persuade but to compel; not to write books but to raise armies ". As a matter of fact, the cosmopolite bond between peoples and States cannot be constituted "except by a revolution" (ibidem, p.595-600).

A radical inversion of positions was produced with regard to Saint-Pierre (1986, p.40-1 and 164ss). In his view, the treaty that established the perpetual peace played also the role of ensuring the inner stability, that is, of "preserving unfailingly" the signatory States "from any secession, any insurrection, and, mainly, any civil war", an evil regarded as even "more terrible" and "more unfortunate" than the "foreign" wars (ibidem, p.41 and 143). If, in Saint-Pierre, the purpose of the perpetual peace imposes the suffocation of the revolutions (and the capital punishment for the "rioters" and "rebels"), in Rousseau, the political revolution is presented as the mandatory path for the instauration of the perpetual peace. "Pacifism" leads Saint-Pierre to condemn the first English revolution; in Rousseau's "pacifism" it is already possible to perceive the growth of the revolutionary wave that would unsettle the face of France and Europe.

The anti-feudal and anti-absolutist revolution, recognized by Rousseau as the true antidote to the plague of war, breaks out a few years later. With the wave of enthusiasm, not only in France, but also abroad, illusions are diffused according to which the knocking down of the feudal regime in an international scale would eventually and definitively eradicate the plague of war. From Paris, Mirabeau could announce that, following the conquest of the "general freedom", the "unreasonable envies that torment the nations" would also disappear, and the "universal brotherhood" would arise.[4] After having denounced in the despotism, the ambition and the yearning towards domination by the feudal courts the cause for the endless wars that had been dilacerating humanity, other numerous protagonists of the Revolution promised the fulfillment of the "philanthropic dream of the abbot of Saint-Pierre".[5]

Significantly, Barnave particularly insists on the beneficial effect of the owners' control over the Legislative Power. However, he too had the opinion that the war could be extirpated by the elimination of the absolute power of the kings that could launch themselves in adventures of war without any control and, mainly, without running any risk. On the contrary, "the parliament will hardly decide in favor of war. Each one of us possesses properties, friends, a family, a set of personal interests that the war could jeopardize".[6] As a matter of fact, the new revolutionary France was committed not to start a conquest war; it was solemnly committed – as the 1793 Constitution stated – not to intervene "in the government of the other nations". Or, in order to use the terms of the 1791 Constitution: "The French nation renounces the undertaking of any war with a view of making conquests, and it will never use its forces against the liberty of any people".

For the first time in history, a country was committed to conduct a policy of peace, and the ideal of the perpetual peace found its praise, however indirect, in a constitutional text. It is a radical novelty. For Grotius, the interpreter, in a certain way, of the results of the Dutch Revolution, the right to reduce to slavery, by means of the war, not only the individuals but also whole populations (cf. Grotius, De jure belli ac pacis, liv.III, chap.VIII, par.1) is not disputable. He had

in mind, certainly, the colonized populations, since "the nations in which jus illud servitutis ex bello in usu non est" (liv.III, chap.XIV, par.9.) are explicitly excluded. One cannot find a criticism to war even in the "Declaration of Rights", derived from the English "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the Declaration of Independence or the constitutional texts originated by the American Revolution: the rules for the Army recruitment in the event of war were established, but the war remains as a matter of fact and not as a problem. The war only becomes a real problem with the French Revolution: a problem that the political action is requested to solve in order to definitively ensure peace.

We have, so far, mentioned only the second of the radical novelties originated by the French Revolution; it is relevant to mention the first one too. Peace, construed in a Universalist sense, is not thought of in terms of exclusion of the non-Christians any longer; the enemy is not the "infidel" or the "barbarian" anymore, but the tyrant and the sectarian of the despotism, which have interest in or help to perpetuate the condition of war. One can detect a confirmation of this Universalist starting point also in the decision of Robespierre and of the Convention to abolish slavery in the colonies. Saint-Pierre writes his Projet at the moment of the Treaty of Utrecht, which permits to England, coming recently out of its "Glorious Revolution", to take from Spain the Asiento, that is, the monopoly of the traffic of blacks. And the perpetual peace is invoked by Saint-Pierre (1986, p.17) also on behalf of safety and freedom "of trade, both in America and in the Mediterranean". In these "two trades", which "comprise over half of the income of England and the Netherlands" (ibidem), the traffic of the blacks, the trade of slaves was also included, as the texts of political economics of the time clearly evidence.[7] But, for Rousseau (Social contract, I, 4), slavery is simply the continuation of the state of war. Objectively, the reality of war can also be detected in the trade that is ensured by the perpetual peace, and the realization of an authentic peace implies, at the same time, the liberation of the slaves of the colonies. The problem of peace starts not to be able to be thought of in exclusively European terms any longer.

In this picture, we can clearly see the consequences brought by the French Revolution to the debate on the theme of the independence of each State and the international relations between the States. In Saint-Pierre (1986), the treaty that establishes the perpetual peace supposes the reciprocal commitment of non-intervention. However, there are two exceptions to this principle: the first one, explicit, at the expense of the revolutionaries; the second one, implicit, at the expense of the non-Christians: "the European society will occupy itself of the government of each State only in order to preserve its fundamental shape and to rescue, in a quick and effective fashion, in the monarchies, the prince, and in the republics, the magistrates, against the rioters and the rebels" (ibidem, p.164). In its turn, the "European society", even when not displaying an attitude openly hostile to the Muslim States, has the right of resorting to the force to constrain them to adhere to the Treaty, and to adhere in a subaltern position,

since they should promulgate "several articles in favor of the Christians, their subjects" (ibidem, p.161). From this perspective, Saint-Pierre does not go beyond the traditional foundations of the international law. Alberigo Gentile regards as illicit the subjection of the prisoners to slavery, but only on what concerns to the Christian States. Balthazar Ayala, another author that is regarded by the school of Carl Schmitt as one of the craftsmen of the theory of the war limitation, excludes any limitation on what concerns to rebels and heretics, against whom he invokes, on the contrary, a kind of exterminating crusade (Grewe, 1988, p.252 and 246ss; see also Schmitt, 1950, p.123-31).

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Robespierre, Danton and Marat, engraving of 1882 by Alfred Loudet.

We can say that, in his crusade against the French Revolution, Burke (1826a, p.123ss and 145) identifies the figure of the revolutionary with that of the non-Christian or barbarian: the rulers of the new France are, therefore, condemned as "savages" and "atheistic and murderous barbarians", as individuals that, due to "their ferocity, their arrogance, their mutinous spirit, their habits of defying every thing human and divine", should be regarded as "ferocious savages". In such a case – as observed by Gentz (1836-1837, p.198ss), translator of Burke in German and future counselor of Metternich -, the principle of independence of each State has no meaning any longer: in face of a revolution such as the one produced in France, which changes the political-social order, "publicly insults the religious concepts and violates everything that is sacred for men", it is not possible anymore, and not even allowed, that the other States remain aloof; the intervention is not only legitimate, it is an obligation.

On the opposite side, the principle of the right to independence and self-determination was radicalized by Marat, to the extent of including the right to secession for the colonies. Santo Domingo, therefore, where, in the meantime, an insurrection of the black population had risen, had the right of being separated from France, even from the revolutionary France, in order to become an autonomous State, and not under the control of white and proslavery settlers, but under the leadership of black slaves or ex-slaves that constituted the great majority of the population.[8] If the anti-revolutionary publications placed France among the "savages", denying its right to independence, Marat broke the traditional distinction between "savages" and "civilized men", acknowledging also to the first ones the right to self-determination.

2

The enthusiasm that the French Revolution causes beyond the Rhein may also be construed to the light of the new approach to the issue of peace. It is in this context that the fundamental essay by Kant, of 1795, For the perpetual peace, is placed. The "first definitive article for the perpetual peace" is already unequivocal: "The civil constitution of every State should be republican". Despite all the attenuating circumstances that follow such statement, one must keep in mind that, at that moment, the main country with a republican regime was precisely the revolutionary France. Kant proceeds as follows:

> But under a constitution where the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of a state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces, and court festivals are concerned. He can thus decide on war, without any significant reason, as a kind of amusement.[9]

The harsh denouncement that is made here of those responsible for the war aims, explicitly, at the feudal courts, whose corrupted and decadent lifestyle is described and denounced in a precise and merciless fashion.

The fifth "preliminary article" also possesses a significant meaning: "[The States] do not interfere in the government of other nations". Kant's text reproduces here, in substance, the aforementioned article of the Constitution of 1793. Based on the defense of the principle of each State's independence, Kant does not hesitate in harshly criticizing the policy of conquest and abuse of power of Europe in its colonies, and, above all, of England. With a transparent allusion to that country, Kant denounces, with flaming words, "the inhospitable conduct of the civilized states of our continent, especially the commercial states". Precisely, "the injustice which they display in visiting foreign countries and peoples (which in their case is the same as conquering them) seems appallingly great". This "inhospitable conduct" advanced to the extent of reducing whole populations to slavery: and, thus, the "sugar islands" are indicated as "site of the cruelest and

most refined slavery". And all this is done by "powers" that "make much ado about religion"![10] The countries that refused to follow the example posed by the Republican France with the abolition of slavery in the colonies were those committed with the counter-revolutionary crusade also in name of Christianity.

In the meantime, however, within the political and military sphere, the relations of force were quickly changing in favor of France: its armies shifted from a defensive position to a counter-offensive one, advancing and going beyond the borders. The turn in the military plane is also reflected in the ideological plane. The Constitution of 1793, when pronouncing against any form of interference in the internal affairs of another country, was limited to adding that "the French nation is the friend and natural ally of free nations": a formula that could, at the most, open the way for a policy of hegemony on what concerned to countries and populations that were already "free", but that did not authorize, whatsoever, an intervention by the French army to "release" the populations that were still oppressed by the "despotism". But in the Convention already, voices are heard that ascribe the contribution of the new France to the execution of the perpetual peace not to the abstention from any war of aggression, but to the exportation of the revolution, a kind of internationalist assistance to the other populations so that they can, in their turn, get free from despotism, which is the true cause of the fratricide wars between nations. Among those voices, the one of a German emigrant, Anacharsis Clootz, stands out; in April 26, 1793, wishing a definitively pacified universal republic, he states: "the national Convention will not forget that we are the mandataries of humankind: our mission is not circumscribed to the departments of France; our powers are confirmed by the whole nature".[11]

It is, however, the Girondist project of Constitution that is truly characterized by a clear design of expansion and hegemony. This project has been turned down by the Convention, but it is convenient to examine it to get acquainted, at the same time, with the basic trends that emerged little by little in the new bourgeois France of the first years of its life, and with the arguments by means of which those trends were justified, that is, with the ideological instruments that enabled the very revolutionary ideals, which were still intensely felt, to be put at the service of an expansionist policy. The whole "Titre XIII" of the Girondist project was concerned with the "international relations of the French Republic". After having stated (article One) that "the French Republic will only take weapons to preserve its liberty, to conserve its territory and to defend its allies", with the article Two it left the door open to annexations: "The French Republic solemnly renounces to incorporate foreign regions to its territory, unless according to the wish freely expressed by the majority of its inhabitants, and only in the case in which the regions requesting this incorporation will not be incorporated and united to another nation due to a social pact expressed in a previous Constitution and freely consented" (Buchez & Roux, 1834, v.XXLV, p.153). Due to the fact that, at that moment, it was surrounded by the feudal Europe, that is, by countries that were dominated by despotism, the revolutionary

France could easily annex region after region: the concept of the "social pact" as an instrument of fight against the feudal oppression became an instrument of the revived French expansionism.

The one opposing to the inversion, in an expansionist sense, of the Universalist content of the French Revolution was Robespierre. His is a harsh polemic against "the inopportune preacher of the one and universal Republic", assimilated to the counter-revolutionaries (1958, v.III, p.101 – December 25, 1793); his is a piercing irony against those that want something that is not quite clear: "the universal republic or, rather, the universal conflagration" (1967, v.X, p.267 – December 23, 1793); his is a lucid advice not to forget that "nobody loves armed missionaries" (1958, v.I, p.129 – January 2, 1792); his is a clear refusal of the "habit of making every nation happy and free, is spite of itself". On the contrary, "all kings could have led passive lives or die unpunished on their bloodstained thrones, if they had known how to respect the independence of the French people" (1967, v.X, p.230 – December 5, 1793). Of course, also in Robespierre it is possible to catch a glimpse of relapses, but his basic formulation refuses, unequivocally, the theory of the revolution exportation.

It is a theory that finds adepts even outside France. When writing The mission of man, in 1799, Fichte repeats that the condition for the accomplishment of the perpetual peace is the triumph, in the international sphere, of a rational political constitution, of the "true State". But how to achieve such result? He formulates well the hypothesis that internal revolutionary agitations would accelerate the crisis of the feudal system; but, with a change concerning to the past, Fichte presents an entirely different hypothesis:

> No free State can reasonably accept within it forms of government in which the leaders are interested in subjugating the neighboring populations and that, therefore, by their very existence, continuously threaten their neighbors' tranquility: the concern for their own safety drives every free people to equally transform every neighboring population in a free State [...] and, thus, since a few truly free States come to be, the realm of culture and freedom, and with it the realm of the universal peace, will eventually and necessarily embrace, little by little, the whole universe. (Losurdo, 1983-1984, p.135-45)

The roots of war will be definitively pulled up by successive waves of exportation of the revolution, which will overthrow the non-free States that had not yet succumbed after internal revolutions. With Napoleon, the intention of expansionism and colonial conquering becomes more and more evident, by a country that had, however, promised freedom and perpetual peace; and this provokes in Germany a huge crisis of the myths of the revolutionary France, and, by consequence, a reactionary wave and a turbid chauvinism (Losurdo, 1989, chap. I, 1). It is, on the contrary, an extremely dry balance that is outlined by Engels (1955, v.XX, p.239), in the late nineteenth century, for the period comprised between 1789 and the triumphal campaigns of Napoleon: "The

perpetual peace that had been promised becomes an endless war of conquest". But this assessment does not mean, such as in so many contemporaries of Engels, the celebration of war and the derision of the ideal of the perpetual peace. No; it only means that the process of realization of such ideal was way more complex and tortuous, and implied political-social changes that were far more radical than what had been forecast in the beginning.

Ironizing, instead, the failure of the perpetual peace, Joseph de Maistre (1884, v.V, p.24ss) celebrates war as a sacred rite of some sort, to whose charm nobody can be immune:

Photo: Agence France Presse

Earl Joseph de Maistre (1753 – 1821)

> Don't you hear the earth that screams and demands blood [...]? Haven't you noticed that, in the field of death, a man never disobeys? He can slaughter Nerva or Henry IV; but the most abominable tyrant, the most arrogant butcher of human flesh will never hear: we do not wish to serve you any longer. A rebellion in the battlefield, an agreement of fraternization against the tyrant, such is a phenomenon of which we have no recollection.

Maistre may have been right, but only on what concerns to the history that he had behind him: the Revolution of October is the first revolution that has risen from the waves of the fight against war, exalting once more the ideal of perpetual peace originated by the French Revolution, and enriching, in a certain way, the catalogue of the human rights with the fundamental right to peace.

3

A period of enthusiasm that could be compared to the one risen by the French Revolution occurred, in a much bigger scale, following the Revolution of October. The Universalist and internationalist character is even more accentuated. Lenin ("War and revolution", 1955, v.XXIV, p.412) had observed that the dominant ideology did not regard as real wars the colonial adventures, but regarded them as mere operations of an international police, operations which implied, however, gigantic massacres. With the Revolution of October, instead, we insistently talk about those that are defined as "colonial slaves", seen as one of the forces that are protagonists of the struggle that should, finally, eliminate the national oppression and the war.[12] The imperialist States that contend for the colonies with the war are denounced by Lenin ("Socialism and war", 1955, v.XXI, p.276ss) as proslavery States. If, in 1789, the roots of war were found in the feudal system and in the monarchic absolutism, now they are found in the

Photo: Agence France Presse

Vladimir I. Ulianov, aka Lenin (1870 – 1924)

Mao Zedong, aka Mao Tse Tung (1893 – 1976)

system of the capitalism and the imperialism. This is the analysis that appears in Lenin's texts, as well as in the documents of the communist International. But it is advisable to reproduce here, due to its didactic clearness and efficacy, a statement, although very posterior, by Mao Tse Tung:

> "War, this monster of mutual slaughter among men, will be finally eliminated by the progress of human society, and in the not too distant future too. But there is only one way to eliminate it and that is to oppose war with war, to oppose counterrevolutionary war with revolutionary war…"

In order to apprehend the real meaning of that statement, one must keep in mind that, at that moment, the Japanese imperialism had already invaded China, and, in consequence, the arms were in charge. The approach that appears is, in a certain way, similar to the one we have seen in Rousseau: regardless of the concrete, particular struggles, diversely articulated at each time, the war as a general phenomenon is eventually eliminated by a revolutionary process that pulls out its roots all at once and for good. "When human society advances to the point where classes and states are eliminated, there will be no more wars, counter-revolutionary or revolutionary, unjust or just; that will be the era of perpetual peace for mankind".[13] The establishment of the perpetual peace no longer presupposes the disappearance of the despots and feudal lords, but the disappearance of the capitalists, as well as of the social classes in general.

If, in Russia, the Revolution of October had been successful, one year later the people revolutions swept, in Germany and Austria, the dynasties of the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs and proclaimed the Republic, even if the situation was not yet stabilized; in March and April, 1919, the proletarian revolution seemed to triumph in Hungary and Bavaria, at the same time that, in its turn, Italy was on the verge of being unsettled by the movement of occupation of the factories. All of these events seemed to justify the hope for a quick transition from capitalism to socialism in a European or even global scale. There were many exalted statements, or that, at least, seem like that to us nowadays. Some weeks after the foundation of the communist International, Zinoviev expressed his thoughts as follows:

> "Old Europe is rushing toward revolution at breakneck speed. In a twelve-month period we shall already have begun to forget that there was ever a struggle for Communism in Europe, for in a year the whole of Europe will be Communist and the struggle will have begun to extend to America and perhaps also Asia and other continents." (Agosti, 1974, p.75)

In his turn, Lenin himself, usually so a lucid mind, had stated, in his final speech delivered in the Congress of foundation of the International: "The victory of the proletarian revolution on a world scale is assured. The founding of an international Soviet republic is on the way." (ibidem, p.74). And the international soviet republic would mean the establishment of the perpetual peace: what reasons for war could still subsist, at the moment in which the global system of capitalism and imperialism was eliminated and the boundaries between States and the national rivalries disappeared?

At this moment, the struggle for the triumph of socialism in a European or even global scale is still pervaded by the anti-militarist theme, and of commitment for the peace, that had characterized the Revolution of October; and it is strongly entwined to the denouncement of the counter-revolutionary intervention at the expense of the young Soviet Union, and to the struggle for the

acknowledgement of every country's and every people's right to independence and self-determination; for the acknowledgement, therefore, of a right that constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for the establishment of an international order of peace. However, tendencies of a rather different signal start already to be outlined. Always during the first congress of the communist International (1970, p.98), Trotsky, after having stated that the Red Army was felt and regarded by its best soldiers "not only the guard of the Russian Socialist Republic but also the Red Army of the Third International", concluded as follows:

> "And if today we do not even dream about invading the Eastern Prussia – on the contrary, we would be quite happy if Mr. Ebert and Mr. Scheidemann would leave us alone -, it is certain, however, that, when the time comes that our Western brethren call us to help them, our answer will be: 'Here we are!'" (ibidem)

After having been unleashed and having achieved victory on the wave of the struggle for peace, the Revolution of October is invoked as an instrument to legitimate a revolutionary expansion policy that does not respect the boundaries between the States and nations.

We face here a dialectics that is similar to the one that was developed after the French Revolution. That is the reason why Gramsci (1975, p.1730) denounces, in the theory of the "permanent revolution", a "form of anachronic and unnatural napoleonism". But this condemnation of the Trotskyan "napoleonism" does not reveal a clear judgment about the "napoleonism" itself. How to evaluate the Great Nation that was born from the French Revolution, or, in better words, from the counter-offensive that has developed subsequently to the defeat of the intervention of the reaction; how to judge this Great Nation that had objectively contributed to accelerate the crisis and the defeat of the feudal system in an international scale, but which had progressively given itself up to a policy of national oppression and even of plunder of a colonial kind? It is a problem that reclaims Lenin's attention mainly after the Revolution of October, at the moment in which he deepened his reflection on the dialectics that was developed following 1789, when "the epoch of the revolutionary wars in France gave way to the era of the wars of imperialist conquest".

Significantly, at the moment of the peace of Brest-Litovsk, the struggle of the young soviet Russia against the aggression of the German imperialism is by Lenin compared to the struggle that, in other times, had been conducted by Prussia (although guided by the Hohenzollerns) against the Napoleonic invasion and occupation, while, in its turn, it is Napoleon to be defined as "a pirate similar to those that the Hohenzollerns are today".[14] France, which had seen the Revolution's triumph, particularly on the wave of the struggle against the cabinet wars and the colonial adventure policy that were characteristic of the feudal courts, which had become the country propagating the ideal of the universal peace, and which, at a certain moment, had effectively incarnated such ideal with

its claim of every country's right to independence – that very France had turned into an expansionist power. Since the line of demarcation between progress and reaction, as well as between forces of peace and forces of war, cannot be defined once and for all, it is susceptible to changes and inversions that can be radical and, in any case, should be defined by the concrete analysis of the concrete situation.

In other words, countries and peoples had the right to claim independence and self-determination also in face of the revolutionary and Napoleonic France. As we can see, Lenin was flatly hostile to any form of napoleonism. Thus, it is easy to understand his concern, once the perspective of the "international soviet republic" vanished, with developing the rules of pacific coexistence between countries with different social regimes.

The hopes of peace raised by the Revolution of October do not seem, however, to have had a better result than that of the French Revolution. From the French Revolution to the Revolution of October: is the history of the ideal of peace between the nations the history of two failures? As a matter of fact, even more serious accusations are made today against the revolutionary ideal of the perpetual peace. According to Carl Schmitt (1950, 1963; cf. also Schnur, 1983) and to the publications based on him, it was the political tradition that was developed from the French Revolution to the Revolution of October that had forged, with the universalism, the ideological instrument to justify a universal interventionism. Mainly, the revolutionary political tradition, with its universalism, had constructed "the absolute enmity", this new picture unknown to the jus publicum europaeum, and in which one should look for the origin of the massacres and the catastrophe of the West. In this picture, the revolutionary ideal of the perpetual peace would have meant, for true, the retaking of the wars of religion.

It would be easy to demonstrate, within the historical sphere, the falseness of that scheme, highlighting the fact that the counter-revolutionary international intervention, at first against France that had destroyed the Ancien Régime, then against the young Soviet Union, was conducted precisely as a crusade to defend "civilization", and, sometimes, even religion. Long before Schmitt, it was Edmund Burke (1826b, v.VII, p.13ss) to see in the French Revolution "a revolution of doctrine and theoretic dogma" that, due to its "spirit of proselytism", led to think about the protestant reform, although it was a proselytism at the service of an impious and atheist doctrine.

Schmitt, who denounces the French revolutionaries as solely responsible for the retaking of the wars of religion in Europe, is, however, contradicted precisely by Burke (1826a, v.VII, p.174ss), who, after having denounced the Revolution's impiety, launches his appeal to a general war (a true crusade) against France, to a war that is explicitly configured as "a religious war", in the literal sense of the term. A war that was "in many respects entirely different" from the traditional wars, from the traditional conflicts between a nation and another (Burke, s. d., v.VII, p.387).[15]

This time, what was at stake was the "Cause of Humanity"; it was about saving "the civilized World from impiety and barbarism", removing the menace that hovered over "the happiness of the whole Civilized World". It was about, ultimately, a "civil war" of an international nature. For this reason, the troops engaged against the revolutionary France were "the Avengers of the Injuries and outrages which have been offered to the Human Race": they were summoned not only to confront the French battalions, but also to extirpate Jacobinism "in the place of its origin", to proceed, subsequently, to the "exemplary punishment of the principal Authors and Contrivers of its ruin". It is a true Crusade that is planned: it is not by chance that Burke receives a letter from the Pope, who blesses his noble devotion to the defense of the causa humanitatis.[16] And it is not by chance, either, that Burke (1826c, v.V, p.278), when appealing to a general war against France, makes reference to the example of the alarm raised in his time across the whole Europe by the Anabaptist agitation. In this sense, contrarily to the theses of Schmitt, the war of religion has never completely ceased, even in Europe; only the heretics became, more and more clearly, the revolutionaries and annihilators of the social order.

Carl Schmitt does not hide his admiration for Joseph de Maistre, "this great and brave thinker of the Ancient Regime"; and, sure enough, Maistre is the first to accuse the French Revolution of making barbaric and impious even the gentlemanly "European war", in which "only soldier fought against soldier, while the nations were never in war". On the other hand, however, Maistre celebrates "the enthusiasm of the bloodshed" and seems even to justify the genocide of the Indians. It is true: "the discovery of the New World" was "the death sentence of three million Indians". But, in the end, "there was a profound truth" – Maistre states - "in this first movement of the Europeans that refused, in the century of Columbus, to recognize as their fellow creatures the degenerated men that populated the New World". The disappearance of the gentlemanly wars is regretted only on what concerns to that region of the world, the European nations, over which "the divine spirit" shines in a very particular fashion.[17]

The same can be said about Carl Schmitt. When denouncing the total and discriminatory war, he deplores the disappearance of the jus publicum europaeum, deplores the disappearance of the restrictions that the war had established exclusively within the Western community. The restricted war, non-total and non-discriminatory, presupposes a "homogeneity in the civilization sphere", and this homogeneity the Schmitt of the thirties refused to recognize both to Ethiopia and the African countries, and to the Soviet Union, which he situated outside Europe. Even within Europe, always for the Schmitt of the thirties, the populations that were unable to provide themselves with a State, and the small States, could not be regarded as "subject to the international law".[18] Thus, the way becomes open for the discriminatory and total war against the countries placed outside the jus publicum europaeum (although, from an "externally" geographic perspective, they belong to Europe). And, in

this, Schmitt situates himself in a position of ideal continuity with the counter-revolution theoreticians: after having defined, as we have seen, the French revolutionaries as "atheistic and murderous barbarians", Burke (s. d., v.VII, p.382) insists in the substantial unity of the Christian Europe, on what concerns, at the same time, to the Turks and the Jacobins; the latter ones, moreover, are regarded as much worse than the Turks themselves. We could say that Burke excludes from the jus publicum europaeum the Turks and the revolutionary France, as well as Schmitt will later do with Ethiopia, with the countries that are unable to constitute a State, and with the Soviet Union. To regard as exclusively due to the revolutionary tradition the re-ideologization of war, after the end of the wars of religion - as Schmitt and his disciples do -, is, therefore, a simplification that is on the dangerous verge of the historical falsification.

The fact remains that the hopes of realization of the perpetual peace were fulfilled neither by the French Revolution nor by the Revolution of October: bloody conflicts occurred, even between States that regarded themselves as socialist. Should we, therefore, conclude that the revolutionary utopia of the perpetual peace has failed? Facing the evidence of facts, facing the continuity of the phenomenon of war, should we conclude that the thinking of Maistre, exempt of the "utopia", of the "messianic" illusion of a warless world, reveals, on this issue, a higher theoretical and scientific dignity than, for instance, the thinking of Kant? Such would be an oversimplified and arbitrary conclusion.

Let's make it clear: we should not oppose here two personalities, or even two ideals. It is not about justifying Kant based on the nobleness of his ideal; it is about comparing two opposed analyses of the phenomenon of war within a rigorously scientific sphere. Well, Maistre proceeds to a forced naturalization of a political-social phenomenon ("it is the earth that screams and demands blood"), in such a way that the war is seen as a divine malediction (or blessing), which is impossible to avoid, as a phenomenon that has no relationship whatsoever with the political-social actions and institutions; it is an extremely ideological discourse, since it exculpates beforehand the ones that are responsible for any war. On the opposite side, Kant identifies the link between the cabinet wars of his time and the feudal regime, although having the illusion that the disappearance of the cabinet wars, following the abolition of the feudal regime, would have meant the disappearance of the phenomenon of war as such (an amazing illusion, if we keep in mind that the very essay For the perpetual peace starts to glimpse and denounce the wars of a new kind, caused by the colonial expansion). In its whole, however, if we intend to perform a correct ponderation, the revolutionary illusion and the utopical tension that pass through Kant's writing reveal its precise scientific dimension, in opposition to the political "realism" of Maistre, which is but a mere ideology.

We have seen Engels' verification of how illusory the perpetual peace promised by the protagonists of the French Revolution was. That promise contained a basic ambiguity: if Barnave pointed out in the power of the owners

and in the weight of their interests the assurance of the maintenance of peace, others made reference to the humblest social strata of the population (in the German land, Fichte places his hopes on the "peasants", on the "artisans", on the "children of the people" that were sent to the massacre by the holders of the power) (Losurdo, 1983-1984, p.132ss). The ambiguity of the promises of perpetual peace made by the revolutionaries is, intrinsically, the ambiguity that is inherent to the Third State as such. Now it becomes easier to understand the critical consideration of Engels, and, however, such consideration does not spill from the so-called "realism" that would like to make of war something natural and everlasting. The scientific result of the analysis of Kant (and of the protagonists of the French Revolution) is solid: the bond between the cabinet wars and the Ancient was confirmed; now, it is time to proceed further.

Similar considerations can be made on what concerns to the hopes raised by the Revolution of October. Its contribution was undeniably great, not only in the political sphere but also in the more strictly scientific one, to apprehend, behind the torrents of grandiloquent, overpatriotic and chauvinistic sentences, the real logic (the race to take hold of the markets and raw materials, to obtain higher profits, to achieve hegemony) that led to proofs of force and to massacres in the colonies and in the global ambit. Does such logic cease in a total and definitive way with the occurrence of a radical transformation in the relations of property and production? And what ulterior mechanisms can break out within the socialist societies or in those that proclaim themselves as socialist, and give rise to new tensions, rivalries and national conflicts?

The issue remains unsolved, but it cannot be solved by the dissolution of the patrimony not only of political experiences, but also of the historically accumulated scientific knowledge. One thing is for true: there is no way back to the position held previous to 1917, and still less to 1789. The war cannot become a fact again: it is a problem. The pacifist movements developed in our time are not restricted to the struggle, that is fair and absolutely necessary, to hinder and stop this or that given conflict; they have a higher ambition: to identify and eliminate, once and for all, every mechanism that causes war and impedes the occurrence of an enduring and perpetual peace. Such ambition would be inconceivable without the two great revolutions that have marked the contemporaneous world. However, due precisely to the fact that the war has become, in an irreversible fashion, not a natural event, but a political-social problem, it calls into play precise responsibilities.

The rulers, the power and the political institutions are called to answer for the war, or for the preparation of the war. This presupposition, nowadays obvious, of the pacifist movement, has the French Revolution and the Revolution of October at its back. The fate of Louis XVI was decided also due to his machinations to precipitate France into a war that, he expected, could cause the rebirth of the monarchic absolutism. And the end of the czars was marked by the struggle of a whole population against the imperialist massacre. Since then, the kings and the

rulers that were called to answer – if not before a court of law, at least politically – for their responsibilities in the unleashing or preparation of war are countless. Even regardless of the atrocities and war crimes, the unleashing of a war, of an aggression, is more and more construed and condemned as a crime. And this awareness is the most important result obtained by mankind along the lengthy way that led from the French Revolution to the Revolution of October, in pursuit of an ideal, that of perpetual peace, whose concretization we are still far from glimpsing.

The limitation of war has developed in a different way from what had been imagined by Schmitt, as well as by those that were nostalgic of a jus publicum europaeum, which excluded the colonies and everything that was outside the "authentic" Europe and West, and which did not hesitate in expelling, from the "authentic" Europe and West, the rebels and revolutionaries. At the times of acute crisis, the lack of universalism would eventually put under discussion the limitations of war also within Europe.

The ideas originated by the events of 1789 and 1917 may have contributed by themselves (together with those of the enemies of the two revolutions) to re-ideologize and fanaticize the war; but, at the same time, ripping off from the phenomenon of war its mask of natural fatality, those ideas raised a huge criticism and control of the war and warlike activities from below. It is true that the revolutionary universalism has become, under concrete historical circumstances, an instrument of expansion, but such expansionism finds its limitations and an effective counter-tendency precisely in the revolutionary universalism. It is not by chance that, in his polemics against the theoreticians of the exportation of the revolution in the Brissot way, Robespierre (1958, v.I, p.114-5) warns against the danger of roaming along the road of the Ancient Regime: "If in the beginning you violate their territories, you will irritate the peoples of Germany [...], in whom the cruelties executed in Rheinland-Pfalz by the generals have left deeper impressions than those that some forbidden opuscules could leave"; a French invasion "could revive the memory of the burning of Rheinland-Pfalz" (ibidem, p.130). Brissot had eventually situated himself on an objective line of continuity with the Ancient Regime, while Robespierre's concerns expressed the new content of the revolution.

We should, though, ponder on another aspect: for the first time, with the French Revolution, the colonial domination and the war are questioned at the same time. It is a questioning that is, obviously, absent in the Dutch and English revolutions (strongly driven by the wish of an active participation in the appropriation of the colonial spoils), but which is equally absent in the American revolution, during which the claim for the national independence is mixed, from the very beginning, with the ambition of constituting a new empire to replace the English empire (Bairati, 1975). On the other hand, it is in the course of the French Revolution that voices from personalities so different from each other such as Dupont de Nemours and Robespierre raise to call out "Death to the colonies!", if their maintenance should mean the sacrifice of freedom or of the

revolutionary ideals (cf. Dockès, 1989, p.85). It is not by chance that, years later, the major blow of accusation that Renan (1982, p.103) will aim at the French Revolution will be, precisely, of having blocked "the development of the colonies [...] obstructing, this way, the only way out through which the modern States can escape from the problems of socialism".[19]

Notes

1 This text resumes the article published in Procès (v.19, p.153-71, 1990).

2 Thus, already in the title of the text volumes: Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe, Utrecht 1713, e Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle entre les souverains chrétiens, Utrecht 1717. See Saint-Pierre (1986, p.7ss and 429ss).

3 Thus, according to Rousseau's synthesis (1959, v.III, p.585ss). It is in the volume of 1717 that the union of Christian States is presented under the form of a military alliance against the Turks (see Saitta, 1948, p.72).

4 Mirabeau's speech, August 17, 1789 (in Buchez & Roux, 1834, v.II, p.274ss).

5 Like the Duke of Preslin, mentioned by Saitta (1948, p.119).

6 Barnave, May 21, 1790 (in Buchez & Roux, 1834, v.VI, p.109).

7 Locke (1823, p.414ss), mentioning the colonial trade with Africa, declares more than once that "all the commodities brought from thence, are gold-dust, ivory, and slaves."

8 Cf. L'Ami du peuple, n.624 (in Césaire, 1961, p.175ss).

9 Passage quoted as from the French version of J. Gibelin (Kant, 1948).

10 About the relation between Kant and the French Revolution, see Losurdo (1983).

11 Text in Buchez & Roux (1834, v.XXVI, p.155).

12 See the Manifest divulged by the first Congress of the Communist International in Agosti (1974, p.64).

13 "Strategical issues of the revolutionary war in China", of 1936 (quoted from: Mao Tse Tung, 1966, v.I, p.195 - cf. Port. ed. Mao Tsé-tung, 2004).

14 "Relation on the ratification of the treaty of peace", of 03.14.1918, and "Relation on war and peace", of 03.07.1918, in Lenin (1955, v.XXVII, p.165ss and 90ss).

15 Cf. Burke, s. d., v.VII, p.382, 354, 432, 472, 387, 384, for the following quotations, letters to diverse correspondents, in 1793.

16 Letter from Pius VI, in Burke (s. d., v.VII, p.420).

17 Cf. Losurdo, "La révolution, la nation et la paix», in La Pensée, v.267, p.85-93, janv.-fév. 1989.

18 See Losurdo in Gazzaniga et al. (1989, p.114-6 e 137-47).

19 Also the Nouvelle Droite, in spite of its "differentialist" fashion, continues to accuse the French Revolution of having harmed or jeopardized the colonial domination.

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ABSTRACT - This is an attempt to analyze the notion of "perpetual peace" and of "exporting the revolution", considering the experiences of the French and Russian Revolutions, their previous and successive debates and the innovations of the French Revolution. Moreover, the analyses according to which the political tradition from the French to the October Revolution has falsified, through universalism, the ideological instrument in order to justify the universal interventionism are criticized.

Keywords: French Revolution, October Revolution, Perpetual Peace, Colonialism.

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