

3 The Birth of the Left Fraction of the PCI

The Left Fraction of the PCI was really born after the split of July 1927, which saw the departure of the minority oriented towards the positions of the German Left. As yet, the Fraction had no press in which to develop its positions. Nor did it have an official existence as an organisation. Chased out of the PCI, its militants were exiled in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland and as far away as the USA and Russia. Unable to engage in any activity in Italy after the laws of exception passed by Mussolini in 1926, they were thus dispersed to the most far-off countries. This difficult situation did not break their will. Considering themselves members of a single international body, the workers' International, they were not demoralised by exile. On the contrary, they were to extract new riches from the political life of the countries in which they found themselves. Although they followed the Italian situation attentively, they naturally took part in the political confrontations which were beginning to develop with Trotsky's expulsion from the International and the birth of opposition groups in the Comintern. The Italian workers' condition as 'emigrants' was taken on proudly by the Left; this was shown by Bordiga's intervention at the 6th Enlarged Executive of the Comintern in 1926, when he compared the Italians to the chosen people, the Jews:

To a certain extent, we play an international role because the Italian people is a people of emigrants, in the economic and social meaning of the word, and after the advent of fascism, in the political sense as well... it's 'rather like the Hebrews: if we've been beaten in Italy, we can console ourselves by thinking that the Hebrews also are not strong in Palestine but outside it.

In order to survive, the militants of the 'External' Italian Left, as they called themselves, had to organise

themselves to carry on a political work that had been completely decapitated in Italy. They had set themselves up mainly in France and Belgium. During the war these two countries had seen their youth sacrificed to the world holocaust, returning mutilated and in much diminished numbers. The French and Belgium governments called for Italian manpower, which had already been present on their soil since the end of the 19th century and which was known to be extremely adaptable. The Italian workers provided the Belgian and French capitalist with an underpaid and skilled labour force in the main sectors of the economy (metallurgy, mining, building).

The militants: working class immigrants

The overwhelming majority of the Italian Fraction was composed of workers. This should not surprise us. Under Bordiga's leadership the Communist Party had attracted a whole generation of young workers galvanised by the Russian revolution and the revolutionary movements in Italy after the war. They had been formed in this revolutionary struggle and had not gone through the demoralisation of an inglorious defeat. On the contrary, they had ardently resisted the offensive of the Italian bourgeoisie grouped behind Mussolini, often with guns in their hands. Ideologically they had remained loyal to the intransigent Marxism defended by Bordiga. Even when the latter was deprived of his positions in the leading organs, the working class 'base' of the party remained faithful to him. Few of them had followed the Gramsci-Togliatti leadership which the Comintern had placed in an authoritarian manner at the head of the Italian Party. In France itself, in 1926, several thousand Italian communists inside the 'cells' remained faithful to the positions of the Italian Left.

Trained in a great revolutionary tradition, educated by the struggle, nourished by the theoretical rigour of Bordiga, these Italian workers imposed themselves on the revolutionary milieu through the breath of their political culture. With their rigorous judgement they could cut through the general confusion which had developed in the French oppositional milieu in particular. In France, where the political and

theoretical traditions of the communist movement were very weak, their voice remained isolated for a long time, up until the war. In Belgium, on the other hand, as we shall see, the voice of these revolutionary Italian workers had more success in making itself heard within the opposition which had developed on the basis of antiparlamentarianism and in contact with the Dutch Left.

It would be a waste of time trying to name all the members of the Fraction. Not because there were 50 many of them (never more than 100 after 1926): the initial 1,000 in the emigration was considerably reduced in a matter of months. But above all because the Italian Left always refused to personalise its political life. From Bordiga they had learned that its members had to be anonymous and only existed in the collectivity of the party, which went beyond individualities and personalities. What came first was the organisation, and the Fraction always expressed itself not through individuals but through its organs (executive committee, federations, etc.).

Nevertheless, the creation of central organs, and above all the tendency struggles that took place within the Fraction, pushed some militants to the fore. Enrico Russo (known as Candiani), a mechanic from Naples, who fled Italy in 1926; Piero Corradi (Piero), an engineering worker then a taxi-driver living in France; Otello Ricceri (Piccino), a jewellery worker from Florence who emigrated in 1925; Bruno Bibbi (Alfredo Bianco), who had taken part in the Communist 'action squads' against the fascists and had arrived in France in 1922; Ferdinando Borsacchi (Pieri or Rintintin), a car worker born in Florence; Bruno Zecchini (il Biondo), born in Venice and a member of the PCI's 'defence squad' in Milan, escaping from the Lipari islands in 1931 to reach France.

In 1927 all these militants were barely 25 years old; nearly all were young workers who had joined the PCI very young, very often at the Livorno Congress; they already had a long militant experience behind them, having been tempered by fascist repression and the struggle against the right in the party. These names of young workers, chosen from among others, reflect the common history of the members of

the Fraction, of the 'average' militant so to speak — if such a term can be applied to this organisation, where everyone was an active militant, very often until they died.

Other militants, intellectuals' by profession rather than workers, were in the front ranks of the Italian Fraction. They were less young (over 30 and sometimes 40) and some had already been members of the PSI before the war. They had a long history as militants, often having been members of the PCI. Ersilio Ambrogi (Massimo), whom we will hear of again, represented the Left in the right wing central committee elected in 1926; a lawyer by profession, he had to go into exile for many years, in Russia, Germany, then again in Russia, from where he remained in contact with the Fraction. Virgilio Verdaro (Gatto Mammone) was over forty in 1927, when he found himself with Ambrogi in Russia. He left there for France in 1931. A member of the PSI since 1901, a history teacher at the lyceum in Florence, he had always been part of the Left; in 1920, with Bordiga and Giovanni Boero, he had been secretary of the Executive Commission of the Abstentionist Fraction. Both of them remained in touch with Italian and Russian realities, and held responsible positions in the organisation.

Two militants, who were not wage-labourers, were also linch-pins of the organisation. Giovanni Tornielli (Nero) was a businessman in Vincennes; a former provincial councillor in Turin, he was the organisation's treasurer. Mario De Leone, born in Naples, had been close to Bordiga in the 20's; exiled to France he set himself up as a grocer in Annemasse close to the Swiss border (Geneva), from where he would be the representative of a minority which arose during the events in Spain, resulting in a serious crisis in the Fraction.

Some of these militants met tragic ends. This was the case with Fausto Atti, a party member since Livorno, and who had emigrated to Brussels. He was one of the founders of the Internationalist Communist Party (PCInt) in 1943, and for this was assassinated by Togliatti's Stalinists in Bologna. Others, who had been part of the Fraction until its dissolution in 1945, when the new party emerged,

did not suffer such a tragic fate, and also played a leading role: Aldo Lecci (Mario Marini or Tullio), Giovanni Bottaioli (Butta), Stefanini.

Ottorino Perrone

The best-known representative of the Fraction was undoubtedly Ottorino Perrone (Vercesi), so much so that their political enemies called the members of *Prometeo* and *Bilan* 'Perronists'. Born in 1897 in Aquila, he did his military service in the artillery during the war. In 1920, he joined the PSI; he was nominated secretary of the Camera del lavoro in Venice. In 1922, given the job of organising in Padua, he became the editor of the Trieste communist paper *Il Lavatore*. In 1923, he was given the task of reorganising the Federation of Venice and Aquila. He supported Bordiga at the Rome Congress. Known for his talents as an organiser, he prepared the PCI's clandestine conference in Como in May 1924. The police, having learned about his role, put him under house arrest in Aquila. This did not stop him going, with Bordiga, to the 5th Congress of the Comintern in June of that year. He was arrested at the Swiss frontier on returning from Russia, and again transferred to Aquila. In 1925, he was a member of the Committee of Entente (*Comitato di intesa*) made up of Damen, Fortichiari, and Repossi. After moving to Milan, he took care of liaison between the members of the communist left living abroad and Bordiga's tendency. At this time, he was also the secretary of the Communist union federation. At the Lyon Congress in 1926 he made a strong impression with his defence of Bordiga's positions. After returning to Milan, his house was ransacked by the fascists and he was arrested. Freed again, he was the real organiser of the Left after Bordiga's imprisonment. Put under two years house arrest in November 1926, he fled to France via Switzerland. In Paris, he was the official representative of the party, and regrouped the militants of the Left. In opposition to Pappalardi, he advocated the formation of a Left Fraction, in July 1927. But, in August, he was expelled from France. From then on he lived in Belgium, in Brussels, where he found work as an employee of the Socialist union, where his legal and accounting qualifications (he was a doctor of law) and his long trade union experience stood him in good stead. He

was in permanent contact with the union world, being a member of the office workers' union. With his great political experience, his outstanding writing and speaking abilities, his unlimited passion for theoretical and political questions, Vercesi was for a long time the motive force of a small organisation, which conferred on him the main political responsibilities. His influence over the militants no doubt explains a number of the political agreements and disagreements which appeared later. It was around him that the minorities and majorities on important divergences tended to crystallise.

How many members did the Fraction have? It was difficult to answer this question at the time of the Pantin conference in 1928. Perhaps 200 in all. But at that time, when the reorganisation of the *'Prometeoists'* was being carried out slowly, without any real centralisation, there was no fixed line between militants and sympathisers. It was rather the local sections which were free to define who was a real member of the organisation. Thus, a circular from the central committee of the Fraction, dated January 25 1931, expressly asked the federations to make an exact list of members, so that dues could be regulated. From then on, a distinction was made between militants and close sympathisers. Again in 1931, an internal letter from Bianco asserted that there were 60 members in France, Belgium and the USA, but that "it is impossible to give a figure for Germany, Switzerland, Russia and Italy", despite the fact that it was absolutely necessary to count the membership in order to give mandates to the groups adhering to the International Left Opposition which — in principle — was holding a conference that year.

The Fraction's organisation: France, USA, Belgium-Luxembourg

From an informally organised opposition, the Italian Left transformed itself in 1928 into a centralised organisation independent of the CP. Its central organs (Central Committee, then Executive Commission), were modelled on those of the Communist Parties. There were 'national' federations (Belgium, France) and provincial ones (Paris, Lyon, Brussels, New York) made up of local sections,

who elected a federal committee. It is worth noting that the Fraction rejected the system of workplace 'cells' which had been imposed by Bolshevisation, and which the Left had always criticised for stifling the internal life of the Communist Parties. In adopting a territorial rather than a 'factoryist' organisation, the Italian Left was seeking to develop a real political life, outside the narrow and corporatist framework of the workplace.

When the Left Fraction was formally founded in Pantin in April 1928, there were four federations : one in Brussels, one in New York, one in Paris, and the last in Lyon which centralised the work in Marseilles and Italy. Isolated militants like Mario De Leone in Annemasse and Ambrogi in Berlin did not belong to any federation but were in close liaison with the central committee. There was a group in Luxemburg and another in Moscow, before the departure of Verdaro and Ambrogi. At this time the Paris Federation was divided into three groups (or sections) : one in Paris with 20 members and two others in the outskirts at Bezons (7 members) and Fontenay (8 members). The Lyon Federation, led by Aldo Lecci, had 20 members; the New York one, which did not publish a review in English, but distributed *Prometeo*, 9 members; the Philadelphia group, which was in contact with the American federation, had a sympathiser's status. Finally, the Brussels Federation, which included Vercesi, had nine members, and supervised the work of the group in Luxemburg.

At the end of 1928, the provisional central committee was replaced by a Central Committee of 7 members : three from Brussels (Candiani, Pieri and Vercesi); three Parisians (Peri, Bianco and Nero), and one from Lyon (Tullio). Within the Central Committee there was an Executive Committee composed of three Parisians, with Bianco as secretary. In 1931, Verdaro returned from Russia and was co-opted onto the Central Committee; the Executive Committee was transferred to Brussels. Verdaro was the secretary. Unemployed, he was the only member of the Fraction to be paid as a fulltimer. He was only replaced in 1939, when he withdrew to Switzerland. At the head of the Paris Federation, Luigi Danielis (known as Gigi) was appointed secretary in place of Bianco who had been expelled. Danielis

also took charge of administration.

The founding conference at Pantin

On what political bases was the Fraction founded at Pantin? It was the expulsion of Trotsky and the course initiated by the 15th Congress of the RCP, which proclaimed the “building of socialism in one country” (1), that determined the holding of the Pantin conference to examine the situation created by this “opportunist” course. The conference declared that “the Communist International has not succeeded in eliminating opportunism from its ranks”. Its aim was not to create a new party, but to rejoin the International by eliminating ‘centrism’; it thus called for a 6th World Congress with Trotsky as president. As in 1919, and with the same aim of driving the right from the party, the Italian Left formed itself into a Fraction with its own organs and discipline. It thus left behind the hesitation it had shown in 1925 about constituting itself into a Fraction: at that time it still thought it necessary to keep strictly to the discipline of the International. While the Fraction was in solidarity with Trotsky, it still defended its own standpoint: the theses of Bordiga, and of the Comintern’s 2nd Congress; it thus rejected the 3rd and 4th Congresses defended by the Russian Opposition current around Trotsky. Finally, it should be noted that it formed itself not as an ‘Italian Fraction’ but as a ‘Left Fraction of the Communist International’.

These positions were condensed in a synthetic manner in the final resolution, adopted unanimously:

RESOLUTION OF THE CONFERENCE

- 1. To constitute a Left Fraction of the Communist International.*
- 2. To elect a provisional central committee.*
- 3. To publish a bimonthly, to be called Prometeo.*

4. To constitute left groups whose task will be to wage a ruthless struggle against opportunism and the opportunists. This struggle will be on the basis of the Communist Manifesto, the theses of the first two Congresses of the 3rd International, the Rome Theses, the theses of the national conference of the PCI, the theses presented by Bordiga to the 5th World Congress, the theses presented by the Left to the Lille Congress of the French section of the Comintern and all the writings of comrade Bordiga.

5. To take up as an immediate goal:

- the reintegration of all those expelled from the International who adhere to the Communist Manifesto and accept the theses of the 3rd World Congress.
- to call the 6th World Congress under the presidency of Leon Trotsky.
- to put on the agenda of the 6th World Congress the expulsion of all those who declare themselves to be in solidarity with the resolutions of the 5th Russian Congress. (*Prometeo*, no. 1, May 1928).

This act of foundation, giving rise to the Italian Left's own organisation, now gave it the capacity to intervene publicly in the milieu of the International Opposition. The first groups advocating resistance to Stalinist policies really began to appear in 1928 after the waves of expulsions. With the Russian Opposition decapitated, the European and American groups came to the fore. In Germany, whose communist movement was the most important outside the USSR, there was formed in March 1928 the Leninbund led by Urbahns; for a short period Ruth Fischer and Arkadij Maslow were part of it. It regrouped several thousand members, the disappearance of Korsch's group having left room for its formation. Much earlier (1924) the Greek opposition, known as the 'Archeiomarxists', had been expelled from the party and formed a group of over 2,000 members. In Belgium, the Opposition was born in 1928 out of the vigorous condemnation by the central committee of the PCB, of the repression against Trotsky in Russia. After their exclusion, Van Overstraeten, the founder of the party, and Adhemar Hennaut, both secretaries of the Belgian organisation, founded an Opposition which pronounced itself in favour of "a second party". The same year, the American Opposition was formed around James Cannon, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern; its fusion with the "Trotskyist" group in

Boston gave birth to the 'Communist League of America' of 500 members, both American and Canadian (among them the founders of the Canadian CP.: Maurice Spector and Jack McDonald). The defeat of the revolution in China, in 1927, led to the formation of Opposition groups around Chen Du-xiu and Wang Shu-zi. But it was above all in France that the Opposition was to find its main strength: Treint's elimination from the leadership of the PCF gave birth to l'Unité Léniniste (and later Redressement Communiste) which influenced small groups of workers in Bagnolet and Courbevoie (whose leading member was Gaston Davoust). In March 1928, Pierre Naville brought out *Lutte de Classe*, which defended Trotsky's positions. At the end of that year an Opposition of workers excluded from the party was formed in the "15th rayon" (Puteaux, Suresnes, Nanterre, Courbevoie, La Garenne-Bezons). (2)

As it can be seen, the Opposition groups grew as the expulsions multiplied. Coming from different origins, both from the CPs' rank and file and from the bureaucracy, this Opposition was not homogeneous. Within it, two wings emerged: a right wing whose best known representatives were Boris Souvarine and the "Democratic Circle" formed in 1925 in France, and in Germany the KP-O led by Brandler and Thalheimer and formed in 1928, and a left. Very often the left of the Opposition did not distinguish itself very clearly from the right. Their common banner was their aversion to Stalinism.

In France, where the International Left Opposition was most numerous and served in a sense as a reference for all the Opposition groups, an attempt was made at the end of 1927 and in 1928 to gather together all the currents of right and left. On 20 November 1927 appeared *Contre le Courant*, 'organ of the Communist Opposition', which for two years (around Paz, Loriot, Jean Barrué, Lucie Colliard, Delfosse) tried to act as the real representative of the whole Opposition. This group, oscillating between right and left, advocated unification before any confrontation, even before adopting a common platform. Appearing more as a club than an organised fraction, it wanted to get together first and discuss later.

Fist contacts with the Left Opposition

In June 1928 *Contre le Courant* proposed a national conference of the Opposition, to be held on 14-15 July in Paris. The invitation was sent to all the Opposition groups the Opposition in Lyon and Limoges; Rosmer's *Révolution Proletarienne*; Souvarine's Cercle Marx-Lénine; the Barré-Treint group; and finally to the two groups of the Italian Left *Réveil Communiste* and *Prometeo*. Most of the replies were negative. (3)

Prometeo's refusal was particularly clear. It was motivated not by 'sectarian' reasons, by the desire to protect its own little chapel, but by profound political considerations, and a great caution about the method to be applied in order to arrive at a minimum basis of agreement. In a letter of 8th July, Vercesi, writing for the Fraction's political bureau, criticised the method used:

Many opposition groups want to limit themselves to the role of a club which registers the progress of degeneration and does no more than present to the proletariat a series of self-evident truths.

Above all Vercesi reproached the Opposition in general, and *Contre le Courant* in particular, for having taken anti-Stalinism as a common denominator, and not the experience of the Comintern at its beginning:

It is inconceivable that all the events we have been through can be reduced to the question of anti-Stalinism, and it is certain that this basis - anti-Stalinism - provides no guarantee for the regeneration of the revolutionary movement.

For the Italian Left, the proliferation of oppositions was not a sign of strength but of weakness, and this could only be remedied through a discussion that eschewed complacency and laxity.

There are many oppositions. That's bad; but there is no other remedy than a confrontation between their respective ideologies, a polemic, in order to arrive later on at what you propos ... Our watchword is to take our efforts to a deeper level, without being guided by the lure of a result which would in fact be a new failure. We think it is vital to understand each other thoroughly before we can agree whether this or that group is making a true left critique.

Prometeo considered that the Communist Parties and the International were the main terrain for revolutionary activity, even if they had been expelled from them. The role of a Fraction was not to note passively the degenerative process, but to try to intervene actively to reverse a course which was not predestined. However, Vercesi did not exclude the worst hypothesis, the definitive fall of the CPs:

The Communist Parties... are the organs in which we have to work to combat opportunism and - this is not to be excluded - to make them guide of the revolution.

It may be that the opportunists will exclude us all; we are convinced that situations will compel the leaders to reintegrate us, as an organised fraction, unless they lead to the Communist Parties' complete eclipse. In this case, which we consider to be very improbable, we will also be able to carry out our communist duty. (Reply to the Left Fraction to the Communist Opposition, 8th July 1928, Contre le Courant no. 13).

This reply was characteristic of the Italian Left. It was always very prudent in its international contacts. Hardened by its experience in Italy, where it had been weakened by mergers with heterogeneous groups like *Ordine Nuovo* and the 'Terzini', it sought above all for maximum clarity through a confrontation of positions, in order to establish the bases of the disagreements and to go beyond them through clarification. The course of the Stalinist counter-revolution, which often dispersed left opposition groups into confusion, only strengthened its conviction that to resist the tide and maintain one's weak forces, it was necessary to base oneself on firm principles, rather than to 'expand' in a confused manner. This was in no sense a 'sectarian' withdrawal into itself, as the Trotskyists claimed. This is clearly shown by more than three years' collaboration with Trotsky's Left Opposition.

In February 1929, Trotsky, expelled from Russia, exiled in Prinkipo, immediately made contact with the different opposition forces which had arisen in the sections of the Comintern. His prestige as a leader of the Russian revolution, the uncompromising combat he had waged against Stalin and against Zinoviev's indecision, naturally made him the unchallenged symbol of the whole International Left Opposition. His Opposition gained heart through the written correspondence with Trotsky and regular visits to Turkey. In many countries, including Latin American countries like Argentina, Cuba and Chile, an Opposition was developing and it saw Trotsky as its spokesman. Up until 1932, when the Trotskyist Opposition was definitively formed, there were innumerable small groups from Poland to Spain calling themselves 'Bolshevik-Leninists'. But there was a great heterogeneity in these small circles; many who came from the old parties had been deformed by their responsibilities in the period of Bolshevisation under Zinoviev; others were very young and had not been through the Russian revolution or the great debates of the time within the Comintern. Impatience and activism were often the dominant traits in these organisations of young people. Furthermore, very deep divergences soon emerged within them: on the question of the 'regeneration' of the parties, which some like Urbahns and Overstraeten judged impossible, calling for the foundation of new parties; on the nature of the Russian state, which some defined as state capitalist; on the imperialist nature of the foreign policy of the USSR when the Red Army attacked China with the aim of seizing the Manchurian railway; finally, on the question of the United Front with social democracy in Germany, in the face of the development of the Nazi Movement.

In the second quarter of 1929, the International Left Opposition was constituted de facto. On 15 August in France, the first issue of *La Vérité* appeared, around Alfred Rosmer, Pierre Naville, Henri Molinier, Gourget, Lucie Colliard, all from different backgrounds. The Communist League (Left Opposition) was created and aimed to appear as the real mouthpiece of the whole French Opposition.

Although it wanted to adhere to the International Opposition, the Left Fraction did not bide its disagreements with Trotsky. The meeting of the provisional Central Committee at the end of 1928 (see *Prometeo* no. 10) proclaimed its “solidarity with this (Trotsky’s) group in October 1927 for the defence of the principles of the victory of the proletarian and communist revolution of October 1917”, but underlined that “there remain differences in political position between the Left Fraction and the opposition group led by Trotsky”.

***Prometeo* and Trotsky**

In 1929, still anxious to integrate itself into the Opposition, the Italian Left published an open letter to Trotsky in *Prometeo* 20. Trotsky, who had known Bordiga personally and recognised his qualities, responded in a letter dated 25 September. Although he wanted to create an opposition on a purely ‘Bolshevik-Leninist’ basis, the old leader did not want to turn the Italian Left away. The latter had a considerable influence in France; its paper sold better than that of any Opposition group; for the Italian Stalinists, it was much more the ‘Enemy Number One’ than the Trotskyists, to the point where, in a letter of 19 April 1929 to Jaroslavsky, Togliatti demanded that all the Communist Parties “use a maximum of rigour against them” and that “in this already very difficult struggle” they should combat “the debris of the Bordigist opposition which is trying to organise all the malcontents into a fraction”.

(4)

Given the prestige of the Italian Left in the emigration, its political weight, Trotsky’s reply was extremely warm and seemed to recognise the Fraction as the only representative of the entire Italian Left Opposition. He wrote that “The platform of the Left (1926) has made a great impression on me. I think that it is one of the best documents emanating from the International Opposition.” Contrasting the Fraction with the confusion of *Révolution Proletarienne* and Souvarine’s group, he eulogised “the living, abundant, muscular, revolutionary thinking of Amadeo Bordiga.” And he added: “I note with

pleasure, basing myself on your letter published in *Prometeo*, that you are in complete solidarity with the Russian Opposition in defining the social nature of the Soviet state.” In conclusion, he showed the difference between the Fraction and the ‘ultra-left’ *Réveil Communiste* which he defined as ‘confusionist’:

Thus having, on one side, centrists like Ercoli, on the other the ultra-leftist confusionists, you, comrades, are called upon, in the difficult conditions of the fascist dictatorship, to defend the historic interests of the Italian and of the international proletariat. With all my heart, I wish you good luck and success (Trotsky’s letter to the Fraction, 25 Sept. 1929, published in the Fraction’s internal bulletin, no. 2, Sept. 1931).

However, Trotsky added that he wanted “to leave to time and events the possibility of verifying our ideological continuity and our mutual understanding. I hope they will prove to be complete and lasting.”

In practise, the attitude of the ‘Trotskysts’ towards the Italian Left remained ambiguous. In April 1930 an international conference of the Opposition was held in Paris, called by the Ligue Communiste. Out of it came an international bureau composed of Kurt Landau for Germany, Alfred Rosmer for France and Markin (Leon Sedov, Trotsky’s son) for Russia; two other elements came a few months later to complete it: Andres Nin for Spain (*Izquierda comunista*) and Shachtman for the USA. It seems that the Fraction was not really invited to this conference or hesitated to go to, even though it had published a draft text for it in *Prometeo* 31. (5)

Informed that *Prometeo* had not participated in the conference, Trotsky sent a letter on 22 April, in the form of an ultimatum, which asked the Fraction to define itself either as ‘national-communist’ or as an international tendency:

I. Do you consider that communism can have a national character... Do you then consider yourself as a national tendency

or as part of an international tendency?

2. I do not doubt that you consider yourselves as internationalists. In this case, a second question is posed: what precise international tendency do you belong to?

*3. Your absence from the preliminary international conference could be interpreted as a consequence of the disagreement that separates you from the Left Opposition on questions of principle. If this is the case, a third question is posed: why do you not organise an international fraction of your own tendency? (Trotsky, open letter to the editors of the Italian communist journal *Prometeo*, 22 April 1930, in *Bollettino Interno* no. 2).*

The Fraction's response was not long in coming. In a letter dated 3 June, it pointed out that "it was due to an error in the transmission of the letter of convocation to the directing organs of the Fraction" that it had not been able to attend the conference; it expressed its agreement "with the constitution of this Secretariat" nominated at the end of the conference, but also its "disagreement with the methods of working and its lack of an ideological base". In particular it replied to Trotsky's three questions, insisting that it did not want to create an artificial international organism, even around its own platform

1. We consider ourselves as a part of the international movement;

2. Since the foundation of the Comintern, we have belonged to the left tendency;

3. We do not want to create an international fraction of our tendency, because we think we have learned from Marxism that the international organisation of the proletariat is not an artificial agglomeration of groups and personalities from different countries around one group.

In its reply, the Fraction demonstrated that it had been extremely shocked by the 'national communist' label that Trotsky had given it, since it "represented the first nucleus of Marxist resistance to the progress of opportunism". It did not seek to hide its differences with the Opposition on the slogans of the 'workers' and peasants' government', the 'United Front', and 'proletarian anti-fascist committees', which it rejected absolutely as having led to defeat. But above all it asked for clarification about the

contacts between the 'International Secretariat' and the Stalinist ex-leaders of the PCI who had just been excluded. These elements (Pietro Tresso, Alfonso Leonetti, Ravazzoli) had in 1926 been the most determined adversaries of the 'Bordigist' tendency and had supported until their expulsion the Stalinist policy of 'socialism in one country'; they had thus participated in the campaigns denouncing the Left Opposition and 'Trotskyism'. It was these same elements who were now constituting the 'New Italian Opposition' (NOI) and who were being admitted into the International Opposition, up to the level of its Secretariat. It was thus understandable that in this letter the Fraction expressed its refusal to "participate in the leadership of the Secretariat". On the basis of the 2nd Congress of the Comintern, there could only be one organisation representing communism in each country, on a basis preserving "the proletarian movement from the manoeuvres which led to the triumph of opportunism in the Comintern".

A third letter from Trotsky - and to our knowledge the last - dated 19 June 1930, further widened the gap between the Italian Left and the Trotskyism movement. The tone employed was suspicious of *Prometeo's* good faith. It said:

- that "it is clear from your letter that there is something more here than a postal error";
- that "a current which remains closed up for years on a national basis is inevitably doomed to degeneration";
- that *Prometeo's* divergences were pretexts showing "a purely formalist, non-political and non-revolutionary way of approaching the question";
- that, consequently, "you must play an active part in all the work of the International Opposition, i.e. you must enter its ranks".

Trotsky replied energetically to the questions posed by the Fraction, insisting that the conference was

perfectly well prepared ideologically, that it was “monstrous” to claim otherwise. As for the NOI, he asserted that there had been no manoeuvre in its recognition by the International Secretariat, which had responded “with all cordiality to the questions posed by these comrades”. But, above all, the method Trotsky was using to create the Opposition was contrary to that of the Italian Left. He affirmed in effect that the question of a political platform was secondary, that the platform of 1926 “was only an episodic document which gives no answer to the questions posed today”; that “if the communist left only had 5 members, it would still have to create an international organisation at the same time as a national one”.

A last letter from *Prometeo* to Trotsky, while making no concessions on the political level, clearly left the door open to an active participation within the ranks of the Opposition. It said that “the Fraction has every interest in dissipating misunderstandings and avoiding polemical games that begin by falsifying our opinions”. It thus did not make a fetish out of its platform:

*When we talked about the platform, we did so in the spirit of its application and not as an oracle to which one has to swear a sacred loyalty and whose conservation would acquit us of our duties to the proletarian struggle.
It's 'isolation' was not the result of its own will, but of the general weakness of the whole left communist movement:
As for our so-called international isolation, we also have to consider the modest proportions of our forces which we are not in the habit of exaggerating through bluff.*

Prometeo explained that its “caution in international relations” had enabled it to “resist the inevitable backlash resulting from the prevailing politics of confusion”. Its method was diametrically opposed to that of the Russian Left which “has worked in the direction of the non-elaboration of platforms. It is here that our disagreement lies and not at all in our (non-existent) claim to having a complete and finished document”. The Bordigist current thought that the precondition for an international regroupment was “the critical re-examination of the Congresses of the International, on the statutory

basis of the statutes and principles upon which the Communist International was founded". The Comintern, the reference point for any left communist group, should not be transformed into an idol, the object of a submissive cult, which was the attitude of the Russian Left with its religious attachment to the first four Congresses. On the contrary it had to be subjected to the fires of criticism:

The Communist International represented the first attempt made in the epoch of imperialism. Its work, since its foundation, consisted in a mechanical generalisation to all countries of the programme and tactics of the Russian party. The Communist Parties became parasites on the Russian party and revolution, and one by one they became the main stays for the opportunism which has sapped the basis of the proletarian dictatorship.

Concerning the NOI, *Prometeo* reiterated its accusations of manoeuvring on the part of the International Secretariat:

- 1. A group of the enemy fraction which has declared its solidarity with the International Opposition has immediately been given hospitality in the press of the French Opposition.*
- 2. All this took place without our Fraction being informed of anything. Now, it is to be supposed that, for example, your group has a much better knowledge of the militants and the questions of the Russian movement. If there was no attempt to 'manoeuvre', the first duty would have been to consult our Fraction.*
- 3. To the repeated requests of our Fraction no reply has ever been made... Not only has the opinion of a group affiliated to the Secretariat not been sought, but the requests of this group concerning the New Opposition have not been answered.*

Despite the question of the NOI, the Italian Left was to participate loyally in the work of the International Secretariat (in which it refused to take a leadership role because of the absence of programmatic documents), showed its willingness to participate in all the discussions of the Opposition, and even to intervene in the life of all its sections.

Regarding the NOI the Fraction was to hold a permanent discussion for nearly two years, without either sectarianism or compromise. It published the texts and resolutions of this group in *Prometeo*. Joint meetings were organised from the end of 1930; the Fraction even proposed a joint discussion bulletin, for which it would take responsibility (6).

Relations with the New Italian Opposition, the German and French Oppositions

For the 'Bordigists', it was not a question of forming an 'alliance' or a 'United Front', but essentially of leading the NOI to make a critique of its past and to move towards renouncing its 'antifascist' positions, its support for 'democratic' slogans, and to constitute a true left Fraction whose goal was not the 'critique' of the PCI but the triumph of the Fraction through the expulsion of the Stalinist faction from the communist movement. The discussions led nowhere, and both sides remained on their positions. While *Prometeo* did not manage to win over any of the NOI's members, the reverse was not true, since the latter succeeded in detaching from the Fraction Nicola di Bartolomeo (Fosco), who put into question the programmatic bases of the Pantin conference: supporting Trotsky's positions, he called on the Fraction to participate in the 'Antifascist Coalition' which had been formed around the Left parties in Italy; he considered that the Fraction should not have an autonomous life but should have an entrust tactic, "working in the party... penetrating the party organs in order to combat and prevent its pernicious work of disintegration". (*Prometeo* 42 and 43, 'Il convegno della regione parigina').

In 1931-32, the Italian Left, via Ersilio Ambrogi, entered into direct contact with the German Opposition. The latter came out of a split in the Leninbund over the class nature of the Soviet state, which Urhahns defined as bourgeois. The new organisation, led by Kurt Landau in Berlin, regrouped the 'Wedding Opposition' and a group in Saxony. According to Ambrogi, relations were good: not only did he take part in the meetings in Wedding, he was also invited to the group's national conference, then to an international pre-conference. He thus had the opportunity of discussing with the Spanish

Opposition whose representative Andres Nin lived in Berlin. The criticisms which Ambrogi made to the German Opposition were not 'individual' but reflected perfectly the opinion of the Italian Fraction. The German Trotskyist group, which brought out *Die Permanente Revolution*, had come out of a fusion of several local groups without prior discussion and without establishing a common platform:

...Your unification has come about according to the methods in usage in the Opposition, on the basis of more or less personal agreements, without discussing fundamental questions of principle... In sum you have no platform to refer to. Thus it is the duty of the Berlin and the Leipzig groups to prepare this platform as quickly as possible... From this would come a conference which would be a real conference of unification, and if that is not possible, there will be a split, which would then be the most useful result. (Letter from Ambrogi to the EC of the Fraction, 1-2-31, Ambrogi Archives, BDIC, Nanterre).

Relations remained good despite these hard criticisms. When Trotsky's son (Markin), who was in Berlin in clandestinity, and was a member of the International Bureau of the Opposition, called for a break with the Italian Left, Kurt Landau's group (in a resolution of 24 March 1931) clearly refused and made "a most serious protest against the behaviour of comrade Markin" (cf. Ambrogi Archives), since the "German leadership... has received documents which show that the Italian Left is a member of the Opposition" (7).

The relations with the Belgian Opposition also became very close, at least with Hennaut's group in Brussels. The latter contained an important number of workers; it was also the only group coming out of a CP which had brought the majority of the central committee with it. It existed mainly in the capital and in Charleroi, where the federation was led by Lesoil. The latter rallied to the positions of Trotsky in 1929, advocating participation in the elections and supporting the Red Army's entry into China. In contrast to Hennaut who wanted to form a second party, Lesoil wanted to 'redress' the PCB (Parti Communiste de Belgique) by staying as an opposition. The Charleroi group, pushed on by Trotsky,

split and formed the official section of the International Opposition. Despite its test to attach itself to the Opposition, Hennaut's group came up against Trotsky's categorical refusal to hold a discussion:

*To the first letter sent by the leaders of the Opposition to comrade Trotsky to explain our disagreements, he replied with a categorical refusal to discuss, declaring that he no longer considered the leaders as belonging to the same fraction as his. The International Bureau broke all relations with the Belgian Opposition without giving the slightest reason (8) ('Comment l'Opposition s'est-elle scindée?', *Le Communiste* no. 9, 1st November 1932).*

It was with this group that the Italian Left had the most profound and cordial relations. In the face of Trotsky's policies, there was even a convergence of ideas and a community of work (see below). However the Italian Fraction was strongly opposed to the idea of forming 'a second party', which it thought not only premature but contrary to its methods, which foresaw the emergence of the party in a particular conjuncture corresponding to the triumph of the Fraction.

With regard to the Communist League of Naville, Frank, Molinier and Rosmer, the Fraction's policy was also to intervene towards it in order to clarify disagreements. It had its documents published in the International Bulletin of the Opposition, and at the end of 1931 edited in French a *Bulletin d'Information de la Fraction de Gauche Italienne*. Six issues appeared up to February 1933. The aim was not to close in on itself, but to make its positions known as widely as possible.

In 1931 the Communist League went through a serious crisis. Personal dissensions arose between Frank/Molinier, on the one hand, and Naville/Rosmer on the other. This crisis, which was resolved through Trotsky's support for Molinier (the 'Prinkipo Peace'), ended in the departure of Rosmer, and the formation of the 'Gauche Communiste', led by Collinet and Naville's brother. This group published a bulletin *Le Communiste*. The evolution of the League was not towards the formation of an opposition, but anticipated the policy of entristm which it practised later on. In October and November 1931, the

League proposed to the PCF that it should be reintegrated, accepting in advance the suppression of its press and the dispersal of its groups; it even took out a subscription for *L'Humanité*. Despite the entry into it of Albert Treint and his group, the crises of the League was total, and its membership plummeted.

It was in this situation that in October a delegation of the Fraction, composed of Gatto Mammone (Virgilio Verdaro), Vercesi (Ottorino Perrone), Bianco (Bruno Bibbi) and Toto (whose real name was Gabassi) took part in the League's national conference. Against Molinier, who wanted the Opposition to go back in the PCF, the Fraction pointed out that "in order to regenerate the parties, you want to dismantle the Opposition". While it did not "at all rule out asking to be reintegrated into the party", it was "under conditions exactly opposite to what the League has posed, i.e. on condition of being able to defend the rights of a fraction with its own organisation and press". In effect, "the disappearance of the Fraction can only coincide with the solution to the communist crisis; it will disappear into a regenerated party or it will become the party". Unlike the League, the Italian delegates did not think it possible to regenerate the parties, because they had fallen prey to enemy forces who "threatened the very bases of the proletarian organisation". In these conditions the alternative was not 'between regeneration' or 'opposition' within a healthy organism, but "the inevitable fall of the party" or "its salvation solely through the victory of the fraction". (*Bulletin d'Information* no. 3, November 1931, and no. 4, February 1932). Despite their very deep differences, since the Italian Fraction and the League both adhered to the International Secretariat, it was decided to make official their joint work in France: each group of the Italian Left would nominate a member to represent it in any geographically close group of the League; the delegate would not however take part in voting and would have to conform to the discipline of the decisions taken by the Trotskyist organisation. His collaboration was short-lived due to Trotsky's increasingly over hostility to the Fraction, so that the latter was more and more kept away from the work of the International Secretariat.

The conference of the International Opposition which had been due to take place in January 1931 had been put off by Trotsky, who asked that it be better prepared. Faced with the crisis of the French section of the Opposition, and in reality to keep the Italian Left out of things, Trotsky proposed transferring the 'administrative Secretariat' created in February 1931 from Paris to Berlin, where it would be under the control of his son Markin. This arbitrary decision was taken without asking the opinion of the sections of the International Secretariat. In reply, in a circular letter to all sections, the Fraction made three proposals:

- a preconference should be held rapidly; from this would come:
- an international bureau, with the role of preparing:
- a real international conference (Resolution of the EC of the Left Fraction, in reply to Trotsky's letter of 22 December 1931).

During the course of the year 1932, despite Trotsky's refusal to maintain relations with the Fraction (9), the latter showed its willingness not to act in isolation by proposing to edit a joint review of the Opposition under the responsibility of the French and German Oppositions and of *Prometeo* ('Projet de constitution d'un Bureau international d'information', *Bilan* no. 1, November 1933).

Reasons and consequences of the Fraction's expulsion from the Trotskyist Opposition

All their proposals met with a categorical rejection. In November 1932, when Trotsky, who was in Copenhagen on the invitation of Danish social democratic students, rallied to the idea of a 'Preconference' in February 1933 in Paris, it was in order to exclude the Italian Fraction. From then on the Fraction was no longer part of the International Opposition. In a long text published after this

'Preconference', Trotsky argued that "the Bordigists have never really been an organic part of the Left Opposition", and concluded that "the *Prometeo* group does not belong to the International Left Opposition. The only section of Bolshevik-Leninists for Italy is the New Italian Opposition". (10)

The real reason for the break was not the Fraction's formal adherence to the Opposition, still less "its character as a purely national sect" (the Fraction was of course present in several countries...), but deep political divergences which had been there from the beginning between 'Trotskyism' on the one hand and 'Bordigism' on the other. Trotsky admitted himself that the real divergence was "the refusal to struggle for democratic demands in any conditions and for any policy of a united front with social democracy today in 1933" (10).

The split was inevitable, and in 1933 the Fraction bitterly reproached itself for having put so much effort into this joint work that was doomed to fall, for having tried for a long time to stay within the framework of the International Opposition (11).

In fact the Italian Left was ideologically strengthened by this confrontation. Faced with the grave events which took place between 1931 and 1933, it was able to maintain political continuity with its past positions, the same that it had defended within the PCI. The break with Trotskyism took place in a very clear manner, and really marked the beginning of its existence as a 'Bordigist' current. What were the basic issues behind the break, apart from the organisational ones?

- **The Spanish question and democratic slogans** In 'The Spanish Revolution and the Duties of Communists' (12), Trotsky wrote that "the slogan of the republic is naturally also a slogan of the proletariat". In 1931, the King was chased out in favour of the Republic, which, under the authority of Lerroux, did not hesitate to use ferocious repression against the Spanish workers. But Trotsky not only abandoned the theses of the Comintern on the dictatorship of the proletariat; in the name of

'democratic slogans' he supported the right of the Catalan and Basque bourgeoisie to secede, declaring that "the Separatist tendencies pose to the revolution the democratic duty of national self-determination". And he concluded that the "Spanish revolution" had begun. But what "revolution" was this, since power had been transferred solely from the monarchist bourgeoisie to the republican bourgeoisie? This is why *Prometeo* replied:

It is clear that we cannot follow him along this road, and that to him (Trotsky) as well as to the anarcho-syndicalist leaders of the CNT, we reply by denying in the most explicit manner that communists must be in the front ranks of the defence of the Republic and still less of the Spanish Republic.

For the Fraction there could only be one slogan in the imperialist period of 'wars and revolutions' defined by the Comintern at the beginning of the century: the dictatorship of the proletariat, the destruction of the bourgeois state and its parties of right and left. This important question of the bourgeois nature of the social democratic parties, whose bankruptcy had been proclaimed by Lenin, was naturally closely linked to the question of the united front against fascism in Germany.

- the German question and the United Front. Faced with the development of Nazism, which expressed the offensive of the German bourgeoisie against the workers in a key country in the international situation, Trotsky adopted the same 'tactic' as in 1923, calling for a United Front between the KPD and the SPD. In a letter of 28 July 1931 he wrote: "in certain cases victory is possible even with very bad policies... a victory for the German Communist Party cannot be excluded even with the policies of the Thälmann leadership". But for the Fraction, as reality was to confirm, the "centrist revolution' is inconceivable and to make the revolution, you need a party which is able to liquidate the politics of centrism". (Resolution of the EC of the Left Fraction of the PCI on the tasks of the left fraction of the KPD) (13). Vis-à-vis social democracy, the Fraction reiterated and developed its position that by crushing the German proletariat in 1919, by assassinating Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the

SPD had “made a bed for fascism”. Despite the assertions of the Trotskyists, it did not take up the theory of ‘social fascism’. It considered that social democracy and fascism were two distinct, but complementary, methods for crushing the proletariat. Both were forces of the bourgeoisie but they played a different role in that the first had to wipe out a revolutionary proletarian movement, whereas the second, with the worst crisis of capitalism, had to finish the job by replacing the democratic method with the dictatorial one. This is why the Italian Left refused to give credence to the policies of social democracy through the ‘tactic’ of the United Front. The only solution, the Fraction insisted, was in the “development of class movements” on an economic terrain. Fascism could be overturned, not by supporting the “forces of the enemy”, but through the triumph of the proletarian revolution.

• **The question of the Fraction and the Party** In the international situation of 1931-32 which was marked by the growing and almost complete submission of the CPs to the policies of the Russian state, the Fraction saw no way of constituting an ‘opposition’, which could only mean going back into the CPs, in order to regenerate them. The Italian Left defined an ‘opposition’ as “the current which boits that the parties will reconquer their capacity to guide the proletariat towards the revolution through the specific forms of the life of the party organisation (assemblies, conferences, congresses, etc.)”. The fraction, on the other hand, “is the organism which affirms that only through its channels will the party reconquer the capacity to guide the proletariat to victory”.

However the Fraction was only formally a fraction of the CPs: “in practice, we do not constitute left fractions of the Communist Parties because we have been expelled from these parties”. Its task was to “assure the continuity of the communist movement”. The left fraction was thus defined more by an ideological continuity with the former revolutionary parties. We can see that the concern of the Italian Left was to base itself on the programmatic foundations of the Comintern, and not pretend to be starting from scratch. This was not at all a sentimental attachment to the past but the essential method of the Italian Left, which considered that a revolutionary party could only emerge from a critical

balance-sheet of the old communist movement, and not from speculations about the future. This was the whole difference with the Trotskyists: in 1933 Trotsky proclaimed the death of the Comintern and the immediate necessity to build new parties; the 'Bordigists' affirmed that the conditions for the emergence of new parties and the new International depended on the work and development of the left fractions, but also on the development of a revolutionary situation which would put the transformation of fraction into party on the agenda. The Italian Left was thus unable to proclaim the foundation of an international fraction; this depended fundamentally on the real development of left fractions in all countries, and not on the artificial proclamation of an International which could only exist in a revolutionary situation.

Throughout the years 1931-1932 discussions were taking place about the perspectives for the Fraction. Massimo (Ambrogio) hit that the betrayal of the CPs and their transformation into counter-revolutionary organs meant that the Fraction had to proclaim the formation of the party. Vercesi, opposing this conception, won a majority in the Belgian and French conferences. In fact, since 1930, following the conference of the Belgian federation, the Fraction had been acting as an autonomous organisation with regard to the CPs and had been developing its forces "through the recruitment of militants of the party or those who have moved away from it for political reasons" as well as elements who had not been through the Communist Parties.

Fraction or party? "Centrist" parties, or parties that have "fallen into treason"? Revolutionary or counter-revolutionary situation? There were the implicit questions that had to be answered prior to the appearance of *Bilan*. Other theoretic questions, and burningly important ones in that they would determine the political attitude of the Fraction, had hardly been approached before the "terrible year" 1933:

- the nature of the Russian state which was still defined as a 'proletarian state';

- the nature of ‘national liberation struggles’, a vital question in the period of the developing inter-imperialist rivalries after 1931, beginning with the Sino-Japanese war;
- the role of the revolutionary party in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the nature of the transition period to socialism;
- the form of workers’ struggles since 1914 and of the economic organs of the proletariat;
- the Fraction’s work in the trade unions.

All these questions arising from the new period opened up by the defeat of the German proletariat and the growing incorporation of Russia into the international arena could not be resolved in theory alone. It was in the “situations”, to use a formula of Vercesi’s, that all these questions would be posed, on the basis of a balance-sheet (bilan in French) of the whole revolutionary experience of the post-war period, and in particular of the Russian revolution.

NOTES

(1) “We only wanted to give life to the Fraction when no other solution to the crisis was possible and when any other course would have made us impossible to intervene effectively in the revolutionary struggle.” (*Prometeo* no. 1, May 1928, Brussels).

(2) For the history of the ‘opposition’ refer to the book by Rabaut (op cit.) and the preface by Michel Dreyfus in vol. 1 of the collected works of Trotsky (March - July 1933), EDI, Paris, 1978.

(3) *Contre le Courant*, facsimile Maspéro, 1971.

(4) The PCI central organ thought that the Italian Left had more members than the Stalinised party (cf. Perrone archives). This draft underlined the importance of the conference with these words: “The importance of this event does not derive from the numbers and strength of the groups convened and represented, but from the fact that the constitution of a Secretariat to unify the groups of the Opposition marks an important step in the process of the communist crisis.” But it had its reservations : “The conditions exist for an international regroupment of the Opposition, but within each country there do not exist formations capable of carrying out an effective activity for a centre of the of the international oppositions”. The document called for:

“a) a centre;

b) one based on programmatic foundations

c) individual membership of the fractions under the control of the international Secretariat. If these rules were absent “the Fraction would adhere to the Secretariat but would not participate directly in its work”.

(6) cf. *All'opposizione nel PCI con Trotsky e Gramsci, Bollettino dell'Opposizione comunista Italiana (1931-33)*, presented by Alfonso Leonetti, Rome 1977. In no. 3 of this bulletin we read: The columns of *Prometeo* were opened to us; different documents were published which the official press still hid from the comrades of the Party; various meetings were organised in which divergences were gone into without insults or personalisations.” (*Bollettino*, August 1931).

(7) The Fraction protested vigorously in its press, denouncing Trotsky's manoeuvring:

“Today we are seeing Trotsky adapting the same method, consisting in dividing the International Left Opposition into ‘disciples’ and ‘reptobares’, into ‘Bolshevik-Leninism’ which defines him and his partisans, and ‘Bordigism’, presented as a false tactic, dogmatic and sectarian, the habitual infantilism of the ultra-left (‘Comrade Trotsky exaggerates’ by Gatto Mammone in *Prometeo* 56, 19 July 1931).

(8) “During the Sino-Russian conflict which threatened to lead to war, we could not lose ourselves in discussions... similarly today, we cannot take an indirect responsibility for the sectarian and semi-Bakuninist superstitions of certain groups.” (*Bulletin de l'Opposition*, no. 1, an article by Trotsky).

(9) In a letter of 30 May 1932, addressed to Ambrogi, Perrone even thought it necessary to send this comrade to Prinkipo to clarify the situation.

(10) *Les Congrès de la Quatrième Internationale*, éd. La Brèche, 1978: ‘L'Opposition de Gauche Internationale, ses tâches, ses méthodes (p. 68-69).

(11) From 1931, Ambrogi leant towards breaking with Trotsky; his opinion seems to have been shared by many members of the Fraction.

(12) Article of 24 January 1931, in *La Révolution Espagnole*, texts by Trotsky introduced by Pierre Broué, 1975.

(13) *Bulletin d'Information*, no. 5, March 1932.

(14) “d) since the party has become a counter-revolutionary party, the Fraction engages in the most bitter struggle against the party and declares itself to be the party of the proletariat”. (BI no. 4, January 1932, ‘Différences de tactique et unité de perspectives de l'Opposition Internationale’, by Maxime (E. Ambrogi).