

LA RIVISTA DEL MANIFESTO

We publish below the article with which Lucio Magri, the editor of *La Rivista del Manifesto*, announced the suspension of the journal in December 2004. Magri, who joined the Italian Communist Party in the mid 1950s, soon revealed himself as its most original younger thinker, with critical essays on the Popular Front, the revolutionary party (see *NLR* 1/60, 1970), and a striking book on '68 in France, *Considerazione sui fatti di Maggio*. In 1969, he was expelled from the PCI along with the group of dissidents—Rossana Rossanda, Luigi Pintor, Luciana Castellina, Aldo Natoli and others—who had founded the journal *Il Manifesto*, judged a dangerous threat by the leadership. Active in the independent Left and the peace movement over the next two decades (see his articles 'The Peace Movement and European Socialism', *NLR* 1/131, 1982, and 'The European Left between Crisis and Refoundation', *NLR* 1/189, 1991), Magri became for a number of years one of the leaders of *Rifondazione Comunista* when the PCI split, after jettisoning its name, in 1991. Four years later, he withdrew from the RC when it refused to support the formation of the Dini cabinet, created after the Northern League's defection from Berlusconi's first government. In 1996, after a narrow electoral victory, the Centre Left came to power.

It was under the Prodi government, initially reliant on the RC's parliamentary support, that the veterans of *Il Manifesto*, in collaboration with the RC leader Fausto Bertinotti and the former-PCI intellectuals Pietro Ingrao and Aldo Tortorella, re-created the monthly journal of the 1960s, now (to distinguish it from the daily) as *La Rivista del Manifesto*, under Magri's editorship. It was a rapid success. The combination of intellectual seriousness and connexion to a real political movement made it virtually unique in Europe in this period as a journal with a significant voice in the politics of its country, and no truck with capital. Its closure is a major loss for the international Left.

In the background have lain two developments. On the one hand, the tacticism of various components of the Italian Centre Left and RC, as each manoeuvres with a view to its own advantage in a post-Berlusconi regime, while minimizing discussion of just what such a government would do. On the other, the sudden discovery by both Bertinotti and Ingrao, the patriarch of the ex-PCI, that the history of the 20th century—and with it the entire communist theoretical tradition—was a fatal illusion, whose overriding lesson is that violence of any kind must be abjured by the Left forever. Faced with this double abdication, Magri explains in a text of notable calm and dignity why the project of the journal as he conceived it has become untenable.

LUCIO MAGRI

PARTING WORDS

THE *RIVISTA DEL MANIFESTO* finds itself in a crisis so serious that its founders and editors have decided to suspend publication. It is not a financial crisis: we continue to sell an average of over eight thousand copies an issue, and our deficit is small enough to be easily recoverable, even without the help of advertising or public contributions. The political constituency to which the journal is addressed remains sizeable, and preoccupied with the same issues that concern the editors. So what do we mean by a crisis and why do we feel it puts in question the project of the journal? It is my view that—at least as things stand—the journal has exhausted its ‘motivating impulse’, for reasons that are both objective and subjective. The *Rivista del manifesto* remains a fine product—‘very interesting’, we are often told—but it has become inadequate not only to its own ambitions, however unrealistic these might have been, but also to present needs.

The journal was launched as a political initiative in 1999 by a group of people from a variety of sometimes conflicting backgrounds and traditions, and has always drawn on a wide and diverse pool of contributors. But we did not decide to work together by chance, or on the basis of the lowest common denominator of agreement—a mere disdain for the current state of things. Rather we shared a joint discourse of analyses and expectations, ideas and proposals, that needed to be tested and developed, but gave us a minimum collective identity. It could be summarized in three points, which at the time of the journal’s foundation were by no means taken for granted by the Left at large.

1. A novel—neoliberal and neo-imperial—order had emerged from two epoch-making ruptures: the collapse of actually existing socialism, and the reorganization of capitalism in the wake of a new technological revolution. What did it comport? An omnivorous domination of the economy over every other area of life; the domination of the economy in its turn by the market, and of the market by huge multinational corporations and financial conglomerates; the uncontested supremacy of a single Great Power, with an entourage of subaltern allies and new forms of colonization in the developing world; the decline of political democracy, weakened by the transfer of power to institutions far removed from any popular control, and the exhaustion of its own inner substance.

From the start, it was plain that this new world order exacted enormous costs, exacerbating every familiar material contradiction of capital—inequality, exclusion, instability—and adding new evils: civic, moral and environmental degradation. It was equally clear that these were not a temporary price to be paid for progress. They would be long-lasting, strengthening trends. It was already possible to foresee the symptoms and mechanisms that would soon complicate the functioning of this system, bringing economic crisis and geopolitical conflict, a resort to wars and more open forms of authoritarianism. On the agenda was not, in the phrase of the time, a ‘two-thirds society’ guaranteeing a privileged existence or at least security to most of the world’s population, while temporarily sacrificing and excluding the other third, whose eventual rescue could be entrusted to global economic development. The reality was that this order threatened the well-being, stability and civic existence, even the satisfaction of basic needs, of many individuals and populations. In our national setting that meant the task was not, as the established Left maintained, to make Italy a ‘normal’ country. It was to put in question the international ‘norm’ that Italy was so ill equipped to deal with, yet by which it was conditioned.

2. No less formidable than its contradictions were the strength and stability of the new global order. It possessed overwhelming technological, financial and cultural power, as well as military force. It had acquired new means of co-opting, manipulating, atomizing or repressing even some of those forces, suffering under its dominion, that ought to have resisted it. It was freed from the restraints that had been imposed upon it by the workers’ movement—understood, whatever its own bitter divisions, as the totality of classes, traditions, organizations and states that

had struggled against the capitalist system, setting its mark on an entire century; and which had now entered into crisis as a political subject.

Such were the conditions in which the Third Way was born: the idea that the new world order could and should be accepted though its most glaring faults might be mitigated, even while guaranteeing market freedoms. Its adherents spoke of limited reforms to redistribute a greater sum of wealth, of checking environmental degradation by measures downstream from production, of replacing a now too-costly universalist welfare state with equal opportunity to compete for all, and some protection for the losers. Politics would be revived by enhanced executive power, world governance assured by a wise concert of the leading powers, peace and democracy secured by humanitarian military interventions endorsed by the UN. This was a vision doomed to failure; one that would not only inflict repeated electoral defeats on the centre left, but undermine its bases of support and destroy its morale.

But the same conditions that rendered vain the illusions of the Third Way also disabled any prospect of opposing the new order effectively by pure contestation from below, relying on the molecular growth of alternative experiences and values in social movements, which neither sought nor acted to impinge on major economic decisions, or institutional structures of rule. For the dangers of the times were too great to allow a strategy only for the long run, and the power of the system was too pervasive not to channel and dam the growth of such movements themselves. The very issues they raised, just because they were so huge and complex, needed more than ever forces and resources on a commensurate scale to resolve them.

3. Basing itself on these considerations, the *Rivista del manifesto* was founded around the idea of a medium-term objective. Before us lay the revival of capitalism in a new guise, no longer tethered by many of its traditional restraints. To resist it meant attacking many of the leading ideas and consensual structures of the time. But the conditions for any rapid or global subversion of the system did not exist. The objective that was urgent and *perhaps* attainable was a sweeping reform of it—something similar in scope and range, if distinct in aims and means, to the transformation of social relations, political institutions, international arrangements and common sense that a broad front of forces

and struggles achieved in the middle of the 20th century. The goal, in short, was a programmatic alternative, not a mere alternation in office.

If I have emphasized the ‘perhaps’, it was not just out of prudence, but to indicate a real contradiction. On the one hand, the material and intellectual resources needed to ensure a more widespread well-being, a higher quality of individual and collective life, and a radical reduction in the resort to violence across the world, are now available. Moreover the range of social forces and cultural traditions with a potential stake in a radical transformation of the system has been enlarged, and they have new possible means for understanding this. On the other hand, everything remains to be done to give concrete shape to the idea of such a transformation, to the means of achieving it, to the outline of a new historical bloc behind it. Programmes truly develop only through social and political struggle, to which they can offer coherence and vision, from pressure by movements to action by governments; and route-maps, alliances, basic objectives and acceptable compromises, inevitably evolve with circumstances. All of this was and remains in its very inception. The *Rivista del manifesto* was founded to give some modest support to this essential process—if only to persuade the left of the need, which it had still to acknowledge, for a politics of at once radical and realistic ambition.

The new conjuncture

A lot of water has passed under the bridge in the course of the journal’s five-year existence. The financial bubble of the late 90s has burst, and been succeeded by an economic crisis which, while not dramatic, and uneven in its incidence, has nevertheless persisted with serious consequences for Europe, above all in Italy. In parallel, war has returned to the scene, first in the Balkans, then in the Middle East; and now theorized and legitimated by Washington as a clash of civilizations and response to terrorism. The majority of centre-left governments have been evicted at the polls, and a fresh wave of neoliberal ‘reforms’ is rolling forward, further reducing job security and social benefits. Concurrently, on the other hand, a worldwide movement of opposition, radical in temper and plural in make-up, has brought new social subjects into politics, raising a wide range of issues and developing new forms of organization from below. At maximum strength, when issues of peace and war have been at stake, it has mobilized still broader forces—trade unions, intellectuals—

and not been without influence on leaders of large countries and the churches. Italy has been in the forefront here.

Thus along with great dangers, tragedies and social costs, the period has also seen opportunities for the creation of new alliances and a reconstruction of the left. The expectations of the founders of the *Rivista del manifesto* have in this sense been borne out, even if the speed or scale of events on occasion caught us by surprise. We deciphered the conjuncture without simplification or over-statement, and suggested political responses to it which have since gained a certain acceptance; not, as I will describe below, thanks to us. A number of changes will remain as lasting markers of these years. The hegemonic ideology has lost ground in received opinion. The social movements will not disappear. Certain trade unions have been revitalized. Cracks have started to become visible in the reigning international alliances. Changes of government in some countries—for example, Brazil and India—may open the way to others.

But if we make a balance-sheet of the historical cycle that is now coming to an end, the short-term prospect is not reassuring. The vicious circle of war and terrorism rages unabated. The tragedies of Palestine and Iraq have deepened. The difficulties and limitations of reform in India and Brazil have become clear. Then there are the unresolved crises and ambiguous evolution of Russia, and the role of China as economic interlocutor, if also potential rival, of the United States. The success of the centre right in the European elections, and its reflection in the new European constitution, has already modified labour relations, welfare spending and the tempo of privatization. Sealing all this has been the Republican victory in the us elections. The Italian situation offers little consolation: Berlusconi now seems to be in crisis, but only after laying waste to the economy and unravelling the constitution.

Against this background, movements of opposition are no longer growing rapidly; they are struggling to hold their ground. Most of the established left has reconfirmed its timorous line and conformist outlook. The alternative left has unselfishly taken its place in the new social movements, but has not progressed sufficiently in quantity, quality or unity to be able to offer them a lead. The project of the journal has not corresponded to the reality of the forces in play. We were too impatient and too hopeful: no great front of reform is in sight. For the moment, all that can be done is to try here and there to open breaches for one. Still, this would not in

itself justify the suspension of our undertaking; in principle, indeed, it could reinvigorate it. It would after all be important for the *Rivista del manifesto* to analyse how and why, after so much expense of energy, the record of achievement should be so meagre; to assess the role of objective circumstances and of the subjective responsibilities of the various political and social actors over these last years; and to draw the lessons of the time, as an independent journal could freely do.

A left programme

The fact, however, is that the successive urgent choices and judgements we had to make have confronted us instead with the question of what kind of journal we wanted to produce: one directly engaged in political struggle, or one mainly dedicated to the sort of research and analysis that can indirectly sustain it. This was a debate we could perhaps have resolved with an editorial reorganization, introducing new forces and ways of working together. We did not manage this. In practice that led some to go ahead (quite legitimately) with other political activities, delegating ever more of the actual production of the journal to the editorial board. The undesired effect was a weakening of the journal's character as a collective undertaking. *Todos colaboradores, todos caballeros*. This was the reason why some time ago I asked that there be a rotation in the role of coordinator without this implying any crisis at that stage in the journal. More recently, however, serious political and cultural disagreements have emerged among us. It is my duty to give an account of these and to offer my own view, in a respectful but frank way.

Let me begin with the question of the best way to intervene in the current Italian political situation. Writing just after the 2004 European elections, we all agreed that there are now two essential and connected issues to be discussed. The first is the procedure, the character and conduct of the new coalition to be constructed, capable of defeating the centre-right government and replacing it. After much hesitation and uncertainty, and if only because they see no alternative, the political parties of the opposition have at last admitted the need not just to unite in an electoral alliance, but also to take the responsibility of governing in coalition on the basis of a common programme and an agreed leader. Those who, like ourselves, had long argued for such a convergence cannot fail to consider it an important move in the right direction, to which we hope to have contributed. Now that the decision has been made, it will be difficult to

reverse. It has already led to a much more combative mode of opposition to the government; a campaign of mobilizations has been agreed, and has already borne fruit at the polls. Given Berlusconi's troubles within his own coalition and in the country at large, it is not unreasonable to believe that we can in the end free ourselves from him.

Much less reassuring, however, is what might happen afterwards. To govern with an alliance of forces and interests, each different from the next, is always difficult. The gravity of the situation that will face any new government in Italy is likely to make it harder still. It will have to try to repair the damage done by Berlusconi, which means deciding whether, to what extent, and when to roll back legislation passed under him. It will have to work out when and how to carry out a redistribution of income—urgent both for social equality and a revival of production—in conditions where public finances have been undermined. Economic policies and forms of state intervention to reverse industrial decline, and encourage new priorities for growth, will have to be agreed and implemented—and yield prompt results. A foreign policy must be prepared that refuses further wars, be they 'preventive' or 'humanitarian', helps to settle existing conflicts and assists economic development in poorer countries. All of this will have to be attempted under the constraints of international agreements, the blackmail of financial markets, and lack of any European back-up.

Not only does no programme of this kind yet exist; serious discussion of one has not even begun. Nor should we be surprised at this. Reluctance to confront impending issues is based on the well-founded fear that, if the continuing differences between the parties of the opposition were exposed, they would damage prospects of success at the polls. The coalition lacks, in fact, either the ideas or the will to design the compromises needed to square the totality of positions at stake, and circumscribe the irreducible tenets by which each of its constituents could feel represented. Political realism therefore counsels: 'let's worry about it later'. Some say openly that the dynamic of the movement will impose decisions and tasks on which agreement cannot be secured in advance. When pressed, others admit to thinking that the break-up of the bloc behind Berlusconi will, if necessary, of itself create a 'substitute majority'.¹

¹ The phrase refers to the idea that the centre left could dispense with the need for Rifondazione by recruiting allies from the centre right, after a break-up of Berlusconi's coalition in the wake of electoral defeat.

From that point of view, how much authority to grant the putative leader of the coalition to mediate foreseeable disagreements becomes a vital question.

But those who, like ourselves, have no direct political responsibility in such matters still find themselves caught in a paralysing, or at any rate restricting, contradiction. To what extent can we speak frankly of the negative as well as the positive sides of the centre left without undermining a common struggle? How far and when is it appropriate to criticize political forces that are close to us and which we support—for example, on their own reluctance to outline an explicit programme, or the surreal question of primaries to elect a leader of the left? These dilemmas prompt a kind of self-censorship, likely to persist until the next elections, that cannot but make the journal marginal and ineffectual, frustrating any definition of a political programme, by trapping it between the minimal and the unfeasible.

On unity

This problem is intertwined with and reacts on a second: practical unity among forces on the radical left. These now represent, for better or worse, some 13 per cent of the Italian electorate and more still on the social plane. If, instead of insisting on acting separately and keeping their hands free for the future, they were to work together to shape the programme of the coalition and contribute to the formation of the next government, they could secure significant pledges from their partners now, and puncture future illusions about a 'substitute majority'. This should be easily manageable: there is virtually complete agreement among the various forces on the vital topics of the hour (war, rights, fiscal policy). But such agreement remains blocked not only by past and persisting animosities, or the mere need of each of the leading groups to maintain its visibility. The principal difficulty lies in a common hesitation over laying out clearly where to be intransigent, and where to accept compromises, within the coalition; and then defending these decisions before a rank-and-file that has not been prepared for them, and mass movements that are understandably distrustful of all political machinations.

Nearly everyone now agrees on the need for a co-ordination of the radical left, and the first positive steps have already been taken, with Bertinotti's proposal for a 'container', and Asor Rosa's for a self-summoned

assembly.² How could we not support such proposals when we have for so long insisted on the need for initiatives like them? Nonetheless, if we are to proceed seriously, the obstacles on this path have first to be acknowledged and overcome; otherwise the enterprise could come grinding to a halt, as has happened in the past. How is this to be avoided? It is on this question that a disagreement has emerged within the *Rivista del manifesto*. Some comrades argue, in more or less forceful fashion, that if the radical left is to have any political representation and coherent direction, there is no choice in current circumstances but to acknowledge Rifondazione Comunista as its pole of reference and driving force. They would have us support ‘without reservations’ Bertinotti’s efforts to open out and renew his party.

I and others think somewhat differently. I was personally involved in the creation of Rifondazione, and despite subsequent and serious differences with the party I have always voted for it. I pushed for a place for Bertinotti on the advisory panel of the *Rivista del manifesto*, in which he has long been a valued participant. I recognize that the party is the principal force of the radical left and I appreciate its presence in the alter-globalization movement. I would never dream of suggesting that Rifondazione should change its name, or dissolve itself as a party. I do not believe, however, that it could in the short term come to express or represent the whole of the radical left, even if it succeeds in growing in strength and opening itself to new ideas. For there is a wider and more variegated area of opinion, some of it scattered and some of it organized, that still gravitates around the Democratici di sinistra (DS) and does not know in which direction to go. There are other smaller political formations which, while they may not be in good health, have still managed to collect a full half of that 13 per cent at the polls. There are important sectors among the unions, environmentalists and the peace movement that are all sympathetic to autonomy. And there is an ongoing debate within Rifondazione itself which must not be allowed to open new wounds.

It is not enough to ask these forces for their support, or to offer a sort of gradual convergence, let alone a *de facto* delegation of leadership to Rifondazione. That will not work. Just to draw these forces into a serious pact for common action—not a mere talking-shop—something

² Bertinotti’s proposal was for an alliance that could ‘contain’ a wide variety of parties and associations. Alberto Asor Rosa, an influential literary historian and teacher at the Roman university La Sapienza, proposed a permanent assembly of the radical left.

has to change, rapidly and demonstrably, in everyone and for everyone. Inasmuch as Rifondazione is the major organizing force of this left, and in order to help it, we ought to put two requirements to it: that its shifts of political line be made less suddenly and after more discussion, and that leadership of the party be less concentrated in its General Secretary. These are two changes without which movements already distrustful of the operation of government and of politics in general will not wish to be involved. These forces want to see a new way of practising politics, not just of preaching it.

On these immediate political questions, it is not impossible to reconcile the different positions I have described. The sense of responsibility of all those involved in the *Rivista del manifesto* has ensured that they have not led to polemical exchanges in its pages, or indeed prevented those charged with editing it from mediating between them without compromising their own convictions. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that in the public space our positions have appeared at odds and our differences obvious to all. And that is enough to prevent a journal like ours from carrying out, within the limits of its competence, the function for which it was founded: that of doing politics and not simply talking politics. Well-intentioned people might well believe the latter is enough. Not I. The journal needs more unity, more conviction, more autonomy.

A broader refoundation

The theme, however, with which we have been more largely grappling, and which has in the end divided us, goes well beyond the politics of the short term. It can be described as the challenge of refounding—so far as it is in our power—a kind of thought and a political subject capable of offering a plausible and rational account of the history behind us, an overall interpretation of a present still unfamiliar to us, and a vision of a distant future to which we could aspire without utopian illusion. Such a project would be akin, in other words, to that which took shape in various ways in the 20th century in Marxism and the workers' movement. I am speaking not only of 'values', nor of an ideology (ambiguous term); rather, I am speaking of a vision that roots values in a context and animates a 'real movement'.

The established left feels no need for this. It has become an electoral machine whose ethos and horizon is limited to the short term. Even when

it proclaims lofty values, it fails to ask what different world its victory might serve, but wonders only how it must play to win. Living off ideologies and personnel provided by the current system, this left dismisses as ineffective and dangerous—‘grand narratives’—everything that would transcend it, or would seek to discern in history and society the contours of an alternative potential future. In this view, the Enlightenment and Marxism were mere projections of religion, at best to be put up with sceptically, not a foundation for politics, which is essentially a matter of techniques and administration.

For the alternative left as a political subject, in the proper sense, much more is needed. It needs to be able to isolate long-term trends and problems in history, and to identify the agents, needs and resources within it that offer hope of a qualitative advance of civilization and an alternative project for society—a historical bloc that could realize these. The collapse of actually existing socialism, and the eclipse of social democracy as any kind of other socialism, has on the contrary left a void which has been filled by a spontaneism that negates the need for politics in the name of uncritical faith in the revolt of the ‘multitude’. Such a belief is but a mirror version of faith in progress: neoanarchism versus neoliberalism. Thus the alternative left, fifteen years after 1989, remains a divided minority, oscillating between radicalism and *suivisme*.

The complex, difficult task of reconstructing a political left requires a ‘constituent process’ in which new ideas and new experiences can fuse into coherent form. This was already an issue in the battle around the dissolution of the PCI in 1991. Later the *Rivista del manifesto* repeatedly proposed ideas for such a process, especially after 2001, when the centre left was in turmoil after its electoral defeat, and a crisis of the system coincided with mass protests in Italy. At the time our proposals were greeted with mistrust by those to whom they were addressed. Later they were generally dismissed because of the illusion that the social movements were in themselves sufficient to resolve the problem, and all that was needed was to ‘dissolve ourselves in them’. Others tried different routes: the grouping that suddenly took shape and just as suddenly disappeared around Cofferati;³ the proposal for a ‘Partito di Lavoro’; the founding of as many associations as there are parties. The *Rivista del manifesto* was traversed by each of these endeavours and the unity of its

³ Sergio Cofferati, former general secretary of the CGIL trade union, which led a three-million-strong protest against Berlusconi’s labour legislation.

editors suffered their repercussions to varying degrees. Today the theme of a 'constituent process' has finally entered the political agenda and passed into received wisdom, even if the general situation is much less favourable for it. Having no pretence to copyright, we can only be happy in the illusion of having been of some use.

Yet the journal's most serious difficulty, paradoxically, derives from this. Any 'constituent process' capable of giving birth to a true political subject, precisely because it must involve some fertile synthesis of different histories and traditions, poses a problem of identity for its participants. This is a problem that affects the *Rivista del manifesto* particularly acutely, because we are located at the most disputed point. For in recent years, the drive of a historical and ideological revisionism—representing the 20th century as a mass of rubble, the October Revolution and Marxism as carriers of a totalitarian virus, the organized party and the exercise of power as leading straight to every kind of degeneration—has become more intense and often much cruder. What is new, however, is that this revisionist impulse has penetrated the whole of the left. This has now occurred even in Italy, which after all boasted a communist party of a rather original sort, one that was the architrave of a new and more advanced democracy, and tried to respond to the challenges of social change around it without renouncing an anti-capitalist perspective.

The *Rivista del manifesto* was conceived for a different sort of task altogether: to confront without reticence or censorship the theme of the progressive degeneration and ultimate failure of the revolutions of the 20th century, and to seek the underlying reasons, not only the particular historical conditions, for that failure. But also to salvage and uphold the contribution that these revolutions made to kinds of human progress that are at risk in our own time. To uncover in the most grievous errors the true questions to which the wrong answers were given. And, last but not least, to identify and value those teachings which the political history and theoretical traditions—Gramsci and a too often mutilated Marx—of Italian communism can offer, in method and in merit, for analysis of the present and projection of the future.

In short, not a bland desire to continue as before, nor a sentimental nostalgia, nor the summary disposal of a heritage. So as critical but convinced communists of long standing, we committed ourselves to a prolonged

personal and collective venture. We have carried out this task for the past five years, even if with uneven application or resolve.

More recently, however—perhaps prey to the force of a wind blowing hard enough to inhibit even those who would resist it—fatal differences have emerged between us. Legitimately, there are those who feel—as a kind of debt of loyalty—the need for a more explicit and radical self-criticism, a break with a past in which we were compromised and which we were too slow and cautious to oppose. I will mention only the name of Pietro Ingrao, for the influence he had, the authority he retains, and the asperity of *Il compagno disarmato*, his recent book-length interview.

Others—including, ironically, an often apostate communist like myself—feel, conversely, the need and the duty to go against the grain, and not to cross that line which divides even the harshest criticism from a blanket dismissal and wholesale rejection of the communist heritage. Not only because of the importance of roots, even when the terrain changes and one wants to graft a new shoot onto the stem of the plant; and not only because of the absurdity that, in an Italy where so many outmoded and discredited traditions have been revived with a little sprucing up, the only tradition to be avoided and exorcised should be its communism. But because I believe that a differentiated analysis, a counter-factual history of the communist tradition and its overcoming, is the most difficult and truly innovative task for a new left in a new world.

Speaking for myself, I strongly doubt that I have the intellectual capacity or the energy left for such a difficult task, and perhaps the times are not yet ripe for it. But I confess that I would not want to free myself from that burden, if only as an instinctive existential choice. In any case, for an inveterate health fanatic like myself, it promises excellent mental gymnastics.

Translated by Alan O'Leary