

Leonardo Ricci

## The Bourgeois in Revolt against Themselves. Cultural Revolution in the U. S.

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*Unpublished typescript retrieved into the collection kept in Casa Studio Ricci. The text was written by Ricci in English, presumably in 1968, when he was living the revolts in the United States.*

Revolutions are happening in the world. Many revolutions.

With war weapons or without. In the jungles, in the rice fields, as well as in the alcoves of bedrooms. Carried on at theoretical level by some vanguard intellectuals or at the level of "praxis"<sup>1</sup> by men who show a different behavior. Political revolutions, social revolutions, cultural revolutions, ethical revolutions. Revolutions of rural masses or of negroes and student revolutions.

In this boiling pot it is difficult to recognize the ingredients – what is known is that the pot is boiling and the lid is about to blow. The progressives claim revolution – of whatever kind – it is enough if the explosion happens. The party of the fearful retreats more and more over the old frontiers attempting to save the so-called values and their own privileges.

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<sup>1</sup> The word was comprised between quotation marks annotated by handwritten signs.



I am within this pot which is boiling since quite a while – since thirty years ago during the second world war. Diving in meaninglessly spilled blood. Dewed in the postwar by the ingenious hope that once defeated the fascism, a new society ought to be born. Economical miracles and booms next, while a new generation was growing along with a forgotten war, forgotten gas chambers, forgotten children slaughters, forgotten genocides in favor of any easy life, where the black war bread kneaded with God knows what scraps, was replaced by American cigarettes and chocolate, car at the door, refrigerator full of unsavory food. The choice was muffled life, narcoticised, sold out integrated, a life without possibility of choice. It was the moment of despair, of the impotence, of the dismissal of you because of your being intellectual by the corrupt, demagogic<sup>2</sup> liar political class which keeps selling as social progress, unreal and anyway alienating income improvements to glut the infection of induced needs, to keep the system from changing, oiling the industrial machine to preserve its grip of power.

Till a new generation is born, the one which accedes to the universities, dissatisfied in their father's life style, which has unmasked the whole of false values, since it is a generation which roots in another war. The war of the boiling pot which is about to blow—and the students revolt is born – in every spot of the world, within historic, cultural, political, social, economic conditions which are not alike.

So that they are differentiated revolts, but all have a minimum common denominator: the bourgeois sons revolt against themselves – and the bourgeois now fear their sons. They arm the policemen against their own sons.

So when they speak about the sons of the other bourgeois, they can say that "they" don't know what they want, haven't got clear minds, since you shouldn't "go to revolt" driving father's car. They must be false revolutionaries, sterile, romantic anarchists.

As if throughout history the revolutions had been alike, out of the same cliché. And what if their force would be just that of a collective subconscious which revolts against a life recognized as stupid, alienated neurotic, lacking reality, untrue, from which a future cannot be drawn anymore?

And if to have your revolution financed by those whom you fight wouldn't be anything else than a less crude revolutionary trait, a more sophisticated technique than those of the past? Paying first the tribute to compromise instead of compromising afterwards?

What if this gust of anarchy and blast of values would happen to be just what is needed to kill the germs of a corrupt, lacking in oxygen, unbreathable air?

Might we answer? I believe so.

Even if we should not hypnotize the future, the modern communications can provide the information over which can be lucidly read the present historical

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2 Mistype: to be replaced with "demagogic".

phenomena without mystification. The youth revolts everywhere in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Mexico, in Spain, in the U. S., in Czechoslovakia.

What is the cause, which is the inner drive, of what kind is that collective unconscious of theirs?

It is at this point when I speak of the double character of each of these attempts of revolt, the one of the hungry and powerless men who crave for a better life, and the one of those who have everything but know that his model of life is meaningless.

The bourgeois<sup>3</sup> class revolting against itself.

I have to give some explanations at the historical political and philosophical level.

If we look at the students slogans we see a good amount of them handed down by past revolutions – it would be of interest to make a semiology study.

From their language I should conclude that their cultural platform extends from the marxist - leninist substratum to the anarchist one, even if with differentiated shades. Nothing new then at the historic level.

But if I look at their behavior I can see in them as a new eagerness, the urgency for a life not only economically different, the research for a new man, for a new existential justification of life, the tension to depart from the philosophic establishment of idealism and of the age of reason, to turn the philosophy of essence into a philosophy of existence, attempting new associative rapports.

Attempting to depart from the schemes of the bourgeois culture, from the logical structures of a consumed thought, into which even the most liberal and progressive and enlightened intellectuals are yet rooted. To reach out to the masses in a new relation with reality.

That new kind of relation that some among us were beginning to foresee and hypothesize - even if as individuals yet – thirty years ago.

That new relation some among us were feeling to rise or were aware of at the perceptive level and not yet at the cognitive level.

That new relation with the reality which made us live within the drama, the internal tragedy, in a real true catharsis. From which who knows if any of my generation will be able to rise.

At least I do not know whether I will emerge or not.

Because even today, after thirty years of exercising with this new way of perceiving reality, as soon as I have to get into the world of words I get a handful<sup>4</sup> of exhausted consumed vocables<sup>5</sup>, derived as they are from old conceptions

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3 The word "bourgeois" replaced "middle" that was on the typescript.

4 Mistype: to be replaced with "handful".

5 In English this noun does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "terms/words".

which have nothing to do with this new reality in action. Not only at the theoretical level, but even at the most direct one of the praxis. How many of the words that all politicians on earth use, like freedom, justice, democracy, slip out of your mouth as stones to spit off because they do not, anymore, fit to what you are experiencing at the perceptive level.

Even the word intellectual is a sickening one. And you feel yourself as a new man within an old skin. A skin about to shed and let's hope at least this youth will be spared so great a stress, as that we are exerting to form this new skin. Because they too are still in the old skin.

These students, offspring of bourgeois, want to change skin, want the contact with the masses.

But which one is the mass? What is it? How is it? The mass are the workers. The exploited ones. All right. But are today's workers the same as thirty years ago? Are the workers in the developed countries still an independent life force or are they already tertiarized? And even where they are not tertiarized yet, is there a true possibility of contact with the students?

Then let's look at the rural class. But here also not all is that easy. Might the farmers be less conservative than the workers? Are they not instead the most attached to the rights of property, in the narrowest, most archaic ancient meaning of it? "This is my land".

So we look at "the damned of earth" to the most oppressed in the most underdeveloped countries, the discriminated because of birth, education, the color of the skin.

But even here, where the group is, where the contact?

If we look at the crude facts, this grasp isn't there, and it is perhaps rightly so. In France the workers are those who practically block the almost successful revolt of the students. In Germany the police practically aren't needed. The citizens protect themselves from the students. In the U. S. the workers oppose the students, and the most extreme negro movements refuse any contact with the whites, even the most enlightened. In Czechoslovakia the international communist party destroys from the top the grass roots instincts.

Is there a reason for all this? Is it mere distrust among classes or is there a deeper cause? Might it all mean that two types of revolution are active, even though gathered under the same flags?

I believe that in different parts of the world from one side the class struggle continues; it is the lower exploited powerless class against the one that holds the power, the controls, the wealthy, exploiting one. A classical struggle started in the modern meaning by the French revolution, passed through the various forms of socialist and communist revolutions.

A struggle which will fatally continue until another revolution, a deeper, more radical, decisive one, that of society all which consciously would find another

existencial<sup>6</sup> justification, a new organization of life outside the subdivisions of work as need to exchange, therefore out of repression as condition for civilization.

A civilization then of men freed from the prehistoric condition of Adam and Eve thrown away from the earthly paradise, who by the sweat of their brows earn their bread with the toil from the soil, give birth with labor pains, starting a progeny of Abels and Cains more and more alienated among themselves until the reach of total incommunication<sup>7</sup>, the present one.

When instead the communication should have become per force effortless, and not needing anymore to go through aprioristic codes, with messages based upon symbols, myths, ideologies. So the students, as collective subconscious, in spite of the need to use some of the ideologic language, are finally free, even if not yet clear from ideologies, but it is this beginning<sup>8</sup> freedom which weakens the contact with the masses still ruled by ideologies.

This disenfranchisement from ideologies was the hope I held in my heart in the postwar period. A hope that was frustrated. Hope and trust today at collective level I place in these students.

But all this might be an arbitrary and subjective interpretation if it were not endorsed by historic verifications<sup>9</sup> or better say historic possibilities.

Is this new revolution possible? This revolution which might be capable to absorb all the others? And where might it find a possible place? Or, which one could be a fecund field for this revolution that we might call cultural but maybe better to call it existential one?

Let's see the problem under the technical aspect.

The present alienated conditions of life of men is to be ascribed to different reasons, and synthesized in the incapacity to survive in the nature without an organization based upon division of work and upon ethics established a priori, over which activities of exchange, even at the communicative level, are started. Conditions of alienations not superated<sup>10</sup> even in the socialist or communist societies.

In fact the relationship man-machine is the same, the "anxiety of the unfinished" has not been eliminated, the participation to work is not realized.

But fortunately today this conditions of alienations, should at least at the theoretical level disappear. We have approached the threshold of a man who has the chances to engage a new rapport with nature. No more enslaved by nature, but with nature, within nature, because he no longer fears it. This mastered nature

6 Mistype: to be replaced with "existential".

7 In English the compact opposite form of "communication" does not exist. Mistype: to be replaced with "no communication".

8 Mistype: to be replaced with "beginning".

9 Mistype: to be replaced with "verifications".

10 In English this verb does not exist, but it is expected that the author would have liked to employ "surpassed" or "overcome".

can be "eaten" and become blood of man. Therefore the divided man, the alienated man, the man "homo homini lupus", the man who crushed the others to survive the man broken into the various fabers, ludens, sapiens categories<sup>11</sup> as separate entities, is not any more a condition of necessity. Men subdivision of activities into primary, secondary, tertiary, which keep men separated as three classes, rural, working, bourgeois, with the advent of automation isn't any longer a must. New activities that we can call the quaternary activities, only intellectual and creative, will engage all men. The present primary secondary and tertiary ones can be taken over by automated machines. There are at least existing the conditions for a new civilization, a new reality, a new whole society, no longer alienated. It is evident that this is possible at the theoretical level, yet it is difficult to be applied at the praxis level. Because it is quite evident too that in order to participate of the activities above defined quaternary men ought to be raised at such a cognitive level to become able to perform such those activities. Otherwise a monstrous civilization is bound to happen, more alienating than the present one.

A terribly grave separation might take place, much more aberrant between the "very few" the skilled, able at the cognitive level, to use the means of the automatic civilization, and the enormous mass of the unskilled of course fed by the skilled, but absolutely deprived of any possibility of choice in a much worse situation that the one of the present sub-proletarians<sup>12</sup> of the slaves, since any possibility or capability of revolt would be taken from them, because the powerful automatic machine controlled by the few could appear absolutely objective, could become a modern form of the ineluctable fate. If this would become true, who knows what kind of intestine revolution could still explode. Absolutely unpredictable, such a cataclysm which might bring the earth to a sort of modern Atlantis lost if not in waters, in space, where the survivors will be wandering for another planet.

But this is at the level of legend and we must stay with our feet on this poor dear earth of ours. Even if today we go out to the space.

And there is then a race between the knowledge of men leading to automation, and the cognizance of men that of such automation must discern the possibilities of relation.

A race which will take many forms. As an example, the race between the problem of education of man, of all men, and the complete reach of automation; between the problem of placing all men in the same condition of possibility of choice and the choiced<sup>13</sup> determined by the computers; between the problem of giving everyone the power of decisions of his own existence and that of an existence without power because absorbed by a unique central control which decides the "others" existence.

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11 Mistype: to be replaced with "categories".

12 The word was underlined by handwritten signs.

13 Mistype: to be replaced with "choice".

It is due then, the forerunning of times<sup>14</sup>. A real, true, cultural revolution is due, capable to precede the times, instead of suffering them, which would permit men to choose "before," before to become obliged to live according to the "state of necessity." A cultural revolution, a real and true existential revolution, which when criticized in the future, will look like the greatest one, a "revolution without revolutionaries" as the title of the book I am writing says, and it will certainly be the greatest revolution in history, comparable only to that one which allowed as animal to pass from the brute level to the one of man.

From prehistory to history or better still, from the conditioned man to the conditioning man.

From man versus nature to the man with nature.

From man who investigates a reality outside himself, to man within reality, collaborating with it.

And where this revolution might more reasonably take place? It is not possible to say if what I am about to state will really happen.

But rationally speaking, if it should happen the most apt country for it could really be the U. S. of America. Many are the reasons. But fundamentally two are enough.

The U. S. are the country where the contradictions<sup>15</sup> are more stressed, almost at a climax. The most powerful country on earth, the one which body contains the man who goes to the space and at same time the man just freed from the most recent slavery, who has not acquired yet the rights to his own complete existence as man. A crucible of men, the most distinct, welcomed to this country by the statues of "liberty". Distinct<sup>16</sup> by culture, tradition, collective and personal history, even because of different skin. But the contradictions<sup>17</sup> are precisely what brings to the fatal fork, to the fall or the overcoming.

The U. S. are the country the most technologically advanced in the world. And the revolution I hope for, cannot take place anymore without the intervention of the automatic machines.

The U. S. happen to be then the country which not only rationally could better than other allow this cultural existential revolution but they should even feel bound to it, and not consider it as a mere possibility. Because such a revolution could spare the other terrible bloody revolutions, the still archaic revolutions, which look still necessary until this urgency for a new justification of existence will not be granted.

Analogically and only analogically, since I do not absolutely believe to the historical recurrences, due to the irreversibility of the processes, the U. S. are living a moment similar to that of the Romans when they received the Christianity

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14 The word was underlined by handwritten signs.

15 Mistype: to be replaced with "contradictions".

16 Mistype: to be replaced with "Distinct".

17 Mistype: to be replaced with "contradictions".

at those times the existential –cultural revolution toward the world now called western, and that was capable to radically transform the roman culture, even if the roman culture was the trunk<sup>18</sup> over which the graft was mad<sup>19</sup> possible.

Will happen or not in the U. S. this revolution without revolutionaries? Are the positive forces of cognizance and conscience of man to prevail or will the reactionary conservative ones be able to make impossible an event otherwise possible in this country? Many the answers pessimistac-optimistica<sup>20</sup>. I myself as intellectual who is about to change his own skin, I cannot be anywhere else than in the latter position. After all this position shouldn't even be considered optimistic since the intellectual should not behave any longer as a kind of judge who judges the reality as outside events pipe in his mouth. He is dans la melee<sup>21</sup> he is within the boilingpot<sup>22</sup>, immersed in the dough of the world, within society, he should not feel a bit different from other men.

No intellectual can anymore allow himself to stay outside of history, even if it were possible to be ahistorical. Anyway, he cannot step out from the process of human life. When the pot will blow, he will have been inside, he too. He must have the courage to force up the lid of the pot. He must help to discern the drives which are stirring within society, so that this "matter of world" could become what its vocation is pushing to, this destiny of evolving toward another "species."

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18 Mistype: to be replaced with "trunk".

19 Mistype: to be replaced with "made".

20 Mistype: to be replaced with "pessimistic-optimistic".

21 Mistype: to be replaced with "dans la mêlée".

22 Misotype: to be replaced with "boiling pot".