



ÜBER DIE GEWALT --- Max Bonhomme & Quentin Lazzareschi

There is nothing more typical of both avant-gardist and Romantic attitudes than to proclaim the end of something, be it the end of art, of politics, of a civilization.

While political Romanticism has mainly been understood as nationalist and reactionary - the idea of a civilizational decline being the pretext for brutal authoritarianism and a militarization of society - authors such as Henri Lefebvre or Michael Löwy have, on the contrary, highlighted a tradition of revolutionary Romanticism.

Like conservative and nostalgic Romanticism, revolutionary Romanticism stands above all against capitalist modernity and its cultural manifestations.

Romanticism is to be understood as a refusal, the negation of a present to which we are called upon to adapt: the reality 'without alternative' of capitalist economy.

In the present situation, where traditional political parties feel threatened by so-called 'populist' movements (a term whose indistinction itself reveals the confusion of institutional politics), where the prospect of climatic disaster appears to be getting closer and closer, the revolutionary-Romantic attitude seems to be more topical than ever.

Revolutionary romanticism could be understood as an attempt to overcome the disenchantment of a period in which art finds its social function only in the form of commodity.

Millenarian mythologies must be extracted from their reactionary overtones.

The political use of *myths*, defended by Marxist theorist Georges Sorel in *Reflexions on Violence* (1908), has all too often been caricatured and monopolized by the most extreme forms of chauvinism.

The neo-Pagan iconography of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, glorifying the pure barbaric force of the German *Volk*, is a spectacular manifestation of this reactionary use of myth.

While the death drive of this monument seems anaesthetized by its transformation into a historical monument and a tourist attraction, the ideology that shapes its foundations is probably reappearing in the primary - and much less 'heroic' - form of ordinary racism.

Simultaneously, liberalism has given rise to another mythology, an anti-romantic mythology, based on economic rationalism .

Behind a façade of scientism and objectivity, economic growth as a mythology gives rise to new forms of brutality.

A paradoxical expression of revolutionary Romanticism could be found in Soviet Constructivism, for which the advent of an egalitarian life in the post-revolutionary context was accompanied by a negation of art as a separate sphere, an abolition of the border between life and its representation.

In 1921, Soviet artist Alexander Rodchenko exhibited three canvases, each one consisting of one pure color: blue, yellow and red. After this exhibition, he signed the Productivist manifesto, that proclaimed the end of canvas painting and a turn towards the production of utilitarian objects.

Nikolai Tarabukin, one of the main theorists of Productivism, understood Rodchenko's gesture as 'the last picture', the ultimate abandonment of a bourgeois form of art in the profit of active participation of the artist to the Socialist economy. The evolution of Rodchenko's work towards graphic design and agitprop exemplified this abandon of an idealist vision of the artist – who, since Romanticism, had been given the privilege of pure and authentic expression of her/his individuality.

These past days, a multitude of monochrome posters, using the CMYK colour model were installed in the city of Leipzig, using the same format as the political posters for the elections in Saxony on 1 September 2019.

If Rodchenko's iconoclastic gesture was a negation of painting as representation, the CMYK posters would rather be understood as a negation of politics reduced to the electoral spectacle, while playing with the conventional forms of political communication.

In this attempt at "designless" agitprop, far from a will to blur the ideological differences between political parties as such, we wish to question the limits of political and artistic representation as it is practiced in modern capitalist states.