



One hundred years and loneliness

There are two historical events that happened a month apart from each other, which in my mind remain closely linked. One (very well-known) evokes for me the other (unknown to most). This is why the clamor aroused by the centenary of the event that marked the rise of fascism to power, the march on Rome of October 28, 1922, could only bring to my mind the disappearance of the anarchist Renzo Novatore, outlaw and poet, killed by the carabinieri during a firefight on November 29 of the same year near Genoa. And if a month ago too many words were wasted on the earlier anniversary, today, you can bet that the later one will hardly be remembered in Novi Ligure, where the local barracks for carabinieri is named precisely after the marshall who killed the author of *Toward the Creative Nothing* (and who was shot down immediately afterwards by the best known child of Novi Ligure, Sante Pollastro).

This anniversary has been tormenting me for weeks. Not only and not so much because it is yet another demonstration of a past that cannot be “corrected”, as because it keeps pounding into my head some bitter considerations Novatore expressed in the last period of his life. Faced with the capitulation of any hope for liberation, faced with the observation of the social slime that overwhelms and submerges everything, he – the exuberant lover of the Dream and the Unknown – had lost the fierce irony that distinguished him at the beginning. His smile was transformed into a sneer. Besieged, literally hounded by the bloodless functionaries of Reality and of the Banal (“the ugly reality that goes on”), he became ruthless. The full awareness of the human condition bit at his flesh and soul, even making him regret being born (“I would not have wanted this miserable life”), catapulting him into sadness (“The sun is setting (the beautiful golden Sun) The evening Angels are in their death throes”), slamming his own loneliness in his face (“I am alone! Alone with my melancholy. Alone with my Destiny”). This would lead him to an admission, in no uncertain terms and with no ambiguity, that is unusual for an anarchist: “I do not want to nor can I espouse the cause of atheistic communism, because I do not believe in the supreme elevation of the masses, and so I deny the realization of Anarchy meant as a social form of human life together ... Anarchy is nectar for the psychic I and not sociological alcohol for the collectivity”. Anarchist with no hope of anarchy, Novatore live his own anarchism knowing his dusk was closing in.

That is why I can't help thinking about his words. It is the context in which they were written that strikes me: not even ten years after the Red Week, a few years after the Russian revolution, the spartacist uprising in Germany, and the two-year red period and factory occupations in Italy – years in which the revolutionary threat



was dreaded because it was concrete, visible and palpable on every street corner, with protest demonstrations, strikes and conflicts taking place every day across the continent. And yet, despite this incandescent climate that inflamed the imaginations of millions of persons, Novatore seemed to have no doubts: in the “low social swamps” where a humanity lives divided into croaking frogs and toads, willing to “die of cowardice” without having “the wings of an Idea” sprouting from their backs, anarchy understood in a collective sense is just a pious illusion.

A century later, where are we? A large part of humanity is now mass-produced according to an algorithm, which is why the earth is increasingly “uselessly trodden by long phalanxes of pygmies chanting stupid prayers”. The wings of an Idea no longer interest anyone, since one no longer needs to be *ready to seize the heavens one more time* (the suckers of an easily interchangeable opinion are much more functional for crawling on the earth and gathering consensus).

Not the outbreak of a war, but the proclamation of a pandemic was enough to push billions of human beings to survive as cowards, willing to voluntarily surrender the least bit of freedom. A surrender that many, far too many subversives have not failed to adhere to, subversives whose social danger is a recurring joke only in state propaganda (with repressive aims) and in the counter-state narration (with self-promotional aims).

And so: was Novatore’s pessimism the fruit of a psychic self-exaltation, as the serious militants of the time thought, or of a lucid desperation? But today, when the world itself is falling into its dusk, isn’t the optimism of serious militants a political self-exaltation? And isn’t a lucid desperation the minimum premise necessary for playing one’s stake on every remaining possibility?