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politici

THE PATH OF WEAPONS

THE GENESIS OF CAPITALISM IN VALTROMPIA

ECOLOGICAL NOTES FOR THE STUDY OF WEAPONS AND THE PLACES WHERE THEY ARE MANUFACTURED

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Rethinking Class Conflict in a Post-Globalized World



POE-Politics Ontologies Ecologies-8
Ecology and War: Between Nationalism, Capitalism and Class

- Ecological origins of arms production
- How war and the war-industrial production transformed and shaped a territory
- The landscape produced by capitalism
- The role of weapons in this process

External hegemony and ecological mobilization

- By the end of the fifteenth century, ecological mobilization—of men, rivers, forests, mines, and flocks—had reached an optimal economic regime □ sixty thousand people employed
- The impact of arms manufacturing extended beyond the economic sphere
- Firearms became symbols of status and power □ defining the landscape
- The demand of firearms was public
- Crises were frequent □ emigration, feuds among different families, and the proletarianization of artisans

“The story therefore ends with the defeat of the craftsmen, the defeat of a production system based on the combination of privilege and specialisation. It was a victory for a merchant group whose monopolistic intent was no more commendable than the privileges so tenaciously defended by the guilds. Originally, the relationships within the chain of skills had been regulated by norms founded on solidarity between groups of craftsmen. The intervention of the merchants broke these links, by putting pressure on the economic weakness of the greater part of the craftsman class and introducing competition through the use of unskilled labour.”

Belfanti, C. M., 2016, *A Chain of Skills: the Production Cycle of Firearms Manufacture...* cit. p. 303.

The factory as the spatialization of an ecological organization

- Progressive concentration of labor and capital
- Liberal-paternalist doctrine, embodied in the factory system, contained within itself the tools to suppress this emerging subjectivity
- Firearms became symbols of status and power□ defining the landscape
- The factory disciplines, and discipline fabricates the factory

War and the cyclical renewal of original accumulation

- Wars have historically represented, for Valtrompia, the starting point of new phases of original accumulation
- In the Fascist period the workforce of the major arms industries expanded through a precarious and fluctuating mobilization of labor. Social conflict reached historical lows, and by that point, in Gardone, the factory had become the only horizon
- The Fascist syndicate did not need to achieve hegemony or domination over the working class. There was no counter-power to suppress, for that space was already firmly controlled by Gardone's industrial elites, who tacitly facilitated the implantation of Fascism in Valtrompia.
- A counter-resistance: a form of resistance not against authority per se, but against the very idea of conflict. Workers preferred the submission and stability offered by the factory to social struggle.

“With the end of the war, the higher and more intense the production fever had been, the more dramatic and heartbreaking the problem of conversion from a war economy to a peacetime economy became. It has been calculated that in Brescia alone, 35,000 workers were employed in the arms industry and that in 1949, there were still 71,000 unemployed people in the entire province. It is no coincidence that in the immediate post-war period, between 1946 and 1952, workers from Brescia once again embarked on the painful journey of emigration to France, Belgium, and Switzerland”.

Fontana, S., 2008, *Una valle mineraria e tre distretti industriali: storia della Val Trompia dal 1945 ad oggi*, Marsilio, Venezia, p.34

The dual regime of justification

- The district's long genesis and the consolidation of a distinctive productive specialization strengthened the position of powerful local actors, it also institutionalized the product itself as a primary source of economic subsistence.
- A grammar of normality, one that powerfully shapes the grammar of judgment among local actors. The category of “product”—the artifact resulting from industrial and artisanal labor—and the sense-making process surrounding it are the results of a political operation, what Boltanski calls “the production of the dominant ideology.”
- The justificatory regimes of those who inhabit “the path of weapons” are morally more resilient than in other contexts, where moral and material contradictions are instead destabilizing. Here, such contradictions—especially given the rapid recurrence of crises—are absorbed into local discursive systems and even into individual value orientations.

The spirit of capitalism consists precisely of this **set of beliefs linked to the capitalist order**, which contribute to **justifying** that order and **supporting**, by **legitimizing** them, the modes of action and dispositions consistent with it. These justifications, whether theoretical or practical, local or global, expressed in terms of virtue or justice, make it possible to carry out more or less arduous tasks and, more generally, support adherence to a lifestyle favorable to the capitalist order.

However, in order to be effective, the justifications in terms of the common good that they **require must be based on local calculations**.

Their judgments primarily concern **the company they work for** and the defensibility of the decisions made on its behalf, first and foremost in terms of the consequences for the common good of the company's employees, and then also for the geographical and political community in which it operates.

Unlike liberal dogmas, these justifications are subject to change because they must combine concerns expressed in terms of justice with more **specific practices linked to a given historical moment of capitalism and the ways of making profit typical of an era**; they must elicit a willingness to act and provide a guarantee that the actions taken are morally acceptable. The spirit of capitalism thus manifests itself inseparably, at every historical moment, in the arguments provided to managers to support the 'good' actions to be taken to generate profit and to legitimize those actions.

Boltanski, L., Chiapello, È., 2014, Il nuovo spirito del capitalismo

DIMENSION	CONCEPT	JUSTIFICATION
HISTORICAL	TRADITION	“Weapons have always been produced here, and most people in Valtrompia work in these factories — this is the world center of arms production.”
	HABIT	“For centuries we have moved forward, our culture is steeped in it.” “The world center of arms production is Valtrompia.”
ECONOMIC	WORK	“There are no alternatives; it’s a job like any other (making butter, cheese, panettone, or rifles — it’s all the same), a secure job with stable pay, yes, it’s protected.”
TECHNICAL	SKILL / INGENUITY	“The artisanal dimension, a history tied to improving mechanisms, to care for detail and engraving.”
LEGAL	PROTECTION	“I don’t think a gun can be considered a dangerous weapon; it’s a defensive tool, an instrument for hunting or sport.”
(A)MORAL	NON-BEING NON-THINKING NON-FEELING	“We are not terrorists!” “There’s a kind of worm (about where the weapons go) that you try not to think about.” “When you see the rifle assembled, you don’t really think... it’s a metal part, very clean, disinfected, your hands don’t get dirty and there’s no mechanism, so it’s just a piece of iron.”
ECOLOGICAL	STRONGHOLD	“The hunter as a regulating agent of wildlife.”

Thankyou for the attention



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