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****Research Article****

The Partisan vs. The Militant: The Janus-Face of Maoist Politics*

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Abstract

This study explores the juxtaposition of Carl Schmitt's partisan and Alain Badiou's militant as political subjects by revealing their foundational reliance on Mao Tse-tung's ideas. Central to this discussion is the influence of Mao's revolutionary praxis, which serves as an unexpected common point between these two opposing theorists. The dual events of the Chinese Revolution and the Cultural Revolution that set Mao's role as a partisan warrior for Schmitt and a militant of mass movements for Badiou present us with a complicated picture. The study argues that the role of violence in Schmitt's and Badiou's theories provides the key to moving beyond a superficial comparison between the two thinkers.

To that end, the study first presents Schmitt's reading of Mao. By focusing on *Theory of the Partisan*, his justification for violence is analyzed through a detailed examination of its destructive logic, militaristic form, and its ultimate purpose of reproducing the state's power. In contrast, the examination of Badiou's Maoist roots reveals a militant subject that embodies universalist and transformative politics by employing the subtractive logic of violence. This, the study argues, creates new political possibilities that challenge existing structures without succumbing to state-centric paradigms.

By situating Mao's thought within the broader discourse on violence and political subjectivity, the study demonstrates how historical and theoretical legacies continue to shape contemporary debates on the nature and purpose of politics. Ultimately, it contributes to political theory by delineating the distinct yet interconnected roles of Schmitt's partisan and Badiou's militant, while highlighting Mao's enduring relevance.

Keywords: Alain Badiou, Carl Schmitt, Mao Tse-tung, the Cultural Revolution, the partisan, the militant.

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****Araştırma Makalesi*******Partizan Karşısında Militan: Maocu Siyasetin Janus
Yüzü******Ömür BİRLER** , Batuhan PARMAKSIZ*******Öz**

Bu çalışma, birer siyasal özne olan Carl Schmitt'in partizanı ve Alain Badiou'nun militanını, Mao Tse-tung'un düşüncelerine dayalı temellerine işaret ederek karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Tartışmanın merkezinde bu iki karşıt kuramcı arasında beklenmedik bir ortak nokta olarak ortaya çıkan Mao'nun devrimci pratiğinin etkisi yer almaktadır. Mao'nun rolünü Schmitt için bir partizan savaşı, Badiou içinse bir kitlesel hareket militanı olarak şekillendiren Çin Devrimi ve Kültürel Devrim olayları bize karmaşık bir resim sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma Schmitt ve Badiou'nun kuramlarında şiddetin rolünün incelenmesinin bu iki düşünürün yüzeysel bir karşılaştırmasının ötesine geçecek bir anahtar olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Bu amaçla, çalışma öncelikle Schmitt'in Mao okumasını sunacaktır. *Partizan Teorisi*'ne odaklanarak, Schmitt'in şiddeti meşrulaştırması biçimi, yıkıcı mantık, askeri biçim ve nihai hedef olan devletin iktidarının yeniden üretilmesi üzerinden detaylı olarak irdelenecektir. Öte yandan, Badiou'nun Maoist köklerinin incelenmesi şiddetin eksiltici mantığını kullanarak evrensel ve dönüştürücü bir siyaseti benimseyen bir militan özne ortaya çıkaracaktır. Çalışma, bunun, devlet-merkezli paradigmalara teslim olmadan var olan yapıları sarsacak yeni siyasal olasılıklar yarattığını tartışmaktadır.

Çalışma, Mao'nun düşüncesini şiddet ve politik özne üzerine daha geniş bir söylem içinde konumlandırarak tarihsel ve teorik mirasların, siyasetin doğası ve amacı üzerine güncel tartışmaları nasıl şekillendirmeye devam ettiğini göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, çalışma Mao'nun kalıcı geçerliliğini vurgularken, Schmitt'in partizanı ile Badiou'nun militanı arasındaki belirgin ancak birbirine bağlı rolleri tanımlayarak siyasal teoriye katkı sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Alain Badiou, Carl Schmitt, Mao Tse-tung, Kültür Devrimi, partizan, militan.

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The Partisan vs. The Militant: The Janus-Face of Maoist Politics

Introduction

The turn of the century has witnessed a certain return of Maoism among a group of European radical left intellectuals. Chiefly, thanks to the rising popularity of Alain Badiou in the English-speaking world and Slavoj Žižek joining forces with him, this recent wave intends to revitalize the idea of communism as the only alternative to global capitalism. Underlying this endeavor is to evoke a new -indeed for Badiou (2008:37) a third- sequence of the communist hypothesis, which can overcome the impasses of the preceding two sequences shaped by two prevailing concerns: overthrowing the existing order by the masses (the first sequence of 1792-1871) and ensuring the revolution's victory via the communist party (the second sequence of 1971-1976) (Badiou, 2008: 35-36). Therefore, the third sequence, Badiou argues, needs to address the problems inherent to its predecessors by distancing itself from the idea of communism based either solely on revolutionary mass movements or on a reformed communist party. For him, this requires a fundamental break from any form of socialist state and its criticism, which was already prefigured by the Cultural Revolution and May 68. Hence, rethinking communism today necessarily entails revisiting Mao Tse-tung's ideas as well as a certain form of Maoism, one that "saturates the form of the party-state" (Badiou, 2005: 482).

Nevertheless, the impact of Mao's ideas on continental political thought is not a new phenomenon. During the late 1960s, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, French and German thinkers, notably Louis Althusser, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Herbert Marcuse, seriously engaged with Mao to develop a criticism of the existing socialist politics. As Liu (2011: 630) points out, the origin of this interest was Mao Tse-tung's essays "On Practice" and "On Contradiction", which led critical thinkers, most significantly Althusser, to formulate several of his crucial concepts, such as overdetermination and structural causality. Others, for example Marcuse (1969), associated Mao's ideas with a position of being "a Marxist, who is not a communist of strict obedience." In sum, Maoism was undoubtedly influential in transforming the

ways in which communism and the Marxist theory of revolution were handled both in theory and practice.

Surprisingly, it was not only the European left thinkers who engaged with Mao Tse-tung and his ideas during the 1960s. On the other side of the political spectrum, an unexpected name, Carl Schmitt, was also interested in the Chinese leader's writings and politics. In his last work, *Theory of the Partisan*, published in 1963, Schmitt (2004: 39) addressed him as "the greatest practitioner of contemporary revolutionary war". Schmitt's references to Mao cannot be taken as a transformation of his political views. Labeled as among the "opportunist, right-wing intellectuals" of 1930s Germany by Scheuerman (1991: 71), Schmitt's analysis of Mao was, in his all too familiar fashion, polemical and obviously serving to strengthen his agenda. However, this does not diminish the striking fact that European political thought in the 1960s was under the spell of Mao Tse-tung, regardless of the ideologies they represented.

Nonetheless, this is not the last instance where Schmitt's works are mentioned alongside the European left thinkers. Another recent example is a self-professed communist thinker, Alain Badiou. During the last two decades, several studies examining Schmitt's and Badiou's theories together contributed to the literature. After all, as Wright (2008) points out, there are too many *prima facie* similarities between the two key concepts of each thinker: Schmitt's exception and Badiou's event. Moreover, Wright is not the only one who presents a comparative study of the two thinkers. In their critical ways, Critchley (1999), Hallward (2003), Power (2006), Barbour (2006), Phelps (2013), and Türk (2013) also examine Schmitt's and Badiou's ideas along with one another. Common to all is the discussion of the political and its subject. In that respect, these critical studies have already shed light on the crucial commonalities and divergencies between Schmitt and Badiou by juxtaposing their works.

However, an unexplored link still brings Schmitt and Badiou in close proximity. This link is violence, or more precisely, the critical role of violence in politics. Both thinkers see the element of violence as inherent to the foundational act of decision through which politics emerges. While for Schmitt, violence is intrinsically related to the friend-enemy distinction, the ultimate criterion defining the autonomous sphere of

the political, for Badiou, violence is a necessary factor in formulating an egalitarian thesis of politics that is always at a distance from the state. Similarly, both thinkers provide their readers with a precise description of the subject, who, by acknowledging the role of violence, carries out the needed actions for politics to happen. Schmitt's partisan and Badiou's militant are none but pristine characterizations of the political subject. But more strikingly, Mao Tse-tung and his ideas undeniably shape the portrayal of the partisan and the militant.

Therefore, this study argues that to better understand the outward resemblance between Schmitt's exception and Badiou's event, the influence of Mao Tse-tung on the emergence of the two distinctive forms of political subject, the partisan and the militant, is essential. Although the element of violence is common to both figures, we claim that the logic (destructive vs. subtractive/affirmative), the form (militaristic vs. masses/communal), and the purpose of violence for the partisan and the militant radically differ. Consequently, this study wishes to contribute to the contemporary literature concerning the concept of the political subject by distinguishing two forms of subjectivity: a partisan for maintaining the status quo and a militant for an egalitarian and emancipatory alternative.

To that end, the study will first examine Schmitt and his *Theory of the Partisan*. After presenting a brief account of the role of violence in his much-exhausted *The Concept of the Political* (1996), we will return to his post-World War II works, where he critically analyzes the post-war world order. By focusing on Mao Tse-tung's appearance as a political thinker as well as a figure of the partisan, we will critically engage with Schmitt's formulation of the political and its subject through their relationship with the logic, the form, and the purpose of violence. The following section will concentrate on Badiou by analyzing his Maoism, a constant yet transforming feature of his thought. Parallel to the preceding section, his concept of the event and its militant subject will be scrutinized in the same structure.

However, before moving on to the main problem of this study, one critical point needs to be clarified. Our foremost aim is neither to offer an analysis of Mao Tse-tung's ideas nor to propose an analysis as to which of these two contemporary thinker's works might better represent his political legacy. Instead, we intend to question how a politically controversial figure, such as Mao, could be a common

denominator for two radically divergent thinkers by revealing their understanding of violence in relation to the political subject.

Schmitt's Partisan

Schmitt's interest in Mao and the Chinese Revolution can be seen in his *Theory of the Partisan*, published in 1963 with the subtitle "A Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political". In the midst of the Cold War, which for him amounts to nothing more than a depoliticizing conflict between two universal abstract poles of liberalism and Marxism, *the Theory of Partisan* offers a spatial and militaristic form for political violence while presenting a logic that destructs universalistic premises. These two expressions of violence, destructive logic, and militaristic form, are the result of the search for Nomos, which stands as the spatial dimension of the political. According to Schmitt (2006: 70), *Nomos* is the measure for the division and organization of the territory determining the specific political, social, and religious order of the community. This measure brings together a spatially concrete unity constituting the essence of *Nomos* upon which Schmitt's political is embodied. The crisis of the bipolar world order that emerged after World War II is a claim for universality that lacks this spatial basis, unlike *Respublica Christiana* and *Jus Publicum Europeaum*. At this very point, Schmitt sees Mao as a partisan figure, who disrupts this universality and brings the spatial dimension back to the agenda. Although a few years after the publication of the book, he accepts that he was not fully aware of the crucial role Mao would play in world history (quoted in Toscano, 2008: 418-419), the Chinese leader still emerged as an important figure in two respects.

The first concerns Mao's position during the Chinese Revolution and the consequent Japanese invasion. In both occasions, Schmitt sees strong elements of decisionism and state of exception, the two pillars of his concept of the political, rigorously undertaken by Mao in the new world order. Schmitt's partisan embodying a strong political will through his decisionism surfaces in Mao's writings on war. Hence, to the extent that Mao's revolutionism presents an existential enmity Schmitt treats him as a partisan subject. Similarly, the spatial limitation during the Japanese Invasion is also considered as a militaristic form of violence that reveals the political.

Second is the Maoist revolutionary partisan's capacity to reveal the destructive logic of violence from abstract enmity to real enmity. The Sino-Soviet split, which began to surface towards the end of the 1950s due to the ideological differences between Soviet and Chinese Marxism, overlaps with Schmitt's criticism of Leninism and universalism. For him, while Lenin's partisanship was associated with illiberal fanaticism, a narrow-minded approach with a claim to universalism, and a rejection of science (Toscano, 2009: 179), Mao appeared as a contradictory figure playing the dual role of a dangerous extremist and a potential solution. It was clear that Mao was an extremist political figure, perfecting a partisan political struggle that left no room for the concept of a "just enemy" and imposed the absolute domination of the state. However, he was also a kind of "*pharmakon*", both an antidote and a poison, representing the hope of a new order, a deterritorialized politics that would replace the Eurocentric global politics with the revolution and the end of colonialism (Toscano, 2008: 419). War, for Schmitt (2004: 41), "finds its meaning in enmity", and politics, emerging from war, contains an element of enmity. Moreover, Schmitt observed "empirically" that even peace contains the possibility of war, thus containing a moment of potential enmity (Schmitt, 2004: 41-42). In that sense, the militaristic form of violence that Schmitt found in Mao as an objection to the de-politicization attempt of the bipolar world emerges from his concept of the political expressing the very same destructive logic of violence.

Despite the ongoing debate on whether *The Theory of the Partisan* represents a contrast (Moreiras, 2005: 581-582) or a departure (Hooker, 2009: 159) from Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, seen through the lenses of violence, his analysis of Mao does not present much of an alternative reading. Instead, it remains a reproduction of Schmitt's search for constitutive violence for a strong state (as capitalist/liberal) with a militaristic form. In Schmitt's search for the political, violence that provides the state its political character is inherently present and connected to a concrete space/land. Therefore, *Theory of the Partisan* expresses an act of violence that first establishes the state through its logic and then reproduces it through its form. To better understand how Schmitt analyzed Mao as a figure of partisan, in the following sections the role of violence through its logic, form, and purpose will be examined.

The Destructive Logic of Violence: The Political

Schmitt's political ontology is based on an irreconcilable conflict between friend and enemy. The fact that the political enemy is absolute, public, other, and foreign means two things. First, the enemy is neither an individual, a personal adversary, nor a rival. In fact, hatred towards the enemy is not even necessary for it to exist. Second, it refers to a conflict that cannot be resolved by the decision of a neutral third party (Schmitt, 2007: 25-30). This antagonistic approach, which forms the nature of the political, has two parts: the state of exception and the sovereign. The state of exception is an unpredictable situation in law. Positioned outside the normal legal order, it never includes a general norm or an absolute exception (Schmitt, 2005: 6). For this reason, the state of exception is different from the state of emergency, whose boundaries are drawn within the framework of the law (Schmitt, 2005: 6, 12). Thus, the state of exception not only requires a complete suspension of the existing legal order but also a sovereign equipped with unlimited authority. Different from anarchy and chaos, there is still a legal order in the logic of the state of exception provided by the very existence of the state that proves its superiority over the validity of the legal norm. According to Schmitt, the state of exception is something that cannot be limited. Nonetheless, for the state of exception to emerge in its absolute form, it is necessary to create a situation in which the provisions of the law can come into force again. In this sense, it reveals the essence of the state's authority in its clearest form (Schmitt, 2005: 13). According to Schmitt, "the exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology" (Schmitt, 2005, 36). Just as deism, a modern theology, eliminates the miracle, the modern idea of a constitutional state rejects the state of exception despite the ever-existing possibility.

In this case, the decision emerges as a decisive factor for the state of exception since both are important in determining the political as a moment when the existing order ceases to exist. For Schmitt, the answer to the question of who will make the decision is clear: the sovereign (Schmitt, 2005: 5). Considered with the concept of the political, what is important for the sovereign is that he decides on the state of exception and determines friends and enemies. This decision also forms the basis of political unity that determines and dominates friends and enemies (Schmitt, 2007: 39).

As a result, for Schmitt, the political is the expression of the decision revealing the state of exception by defining the enemy. This inevitably always contains a destructive logic of violence incessantly reproducing itself. The decision simultaneously necessitates the annihilation of the enemy and its potential ever-present existence. The fact that the political points to an existential distinction between friend and foe by revealing the state of exception stems from its immanence in a decision that includes a matter of life and death, that is, the necessity of war. Thus, the destructive logic of violence is at the basis of Schmitt's political ontology to the extent that it establishes the political existence of the state. The partisan is a political subject so long as he realizes the requirements of the nature of the political. Schmitt is well aware of the consequences of the destructive logic of violence inherent in his theory. Hence the task awaiting the partisan can be in no other form than warfare.

The Militaristic Form of Violence: The Partisan

Schmitt's *Theory of the Partisan* (2004) is a part of war theory. The portrayal of this new type of warrior is strictly related to the investigation of "the political", "Nomos", and "enmity". The partisan character becomes a founding element of the post-World War II order due to his ability to create exceptional space and establish its own laws. In that sense, Schmitt considers four criteria for a theory of the partisan. First is disorder: partisans fight in an irregular manner (Schmitt, 2004:14). The deterioration of the state system means the disappearance of uniforms and weapons in the ongoing conflict. Thus, a partisan character necessarily lacks public signs and continues the war with his own local costume. While the use of the term disorder initially refers to the warrior character of the partisan, it also highlights his being in an illegal position outside the law. In Müller's (2003: 146) words, he "possesses a kind of 'illegal legitimacy'". The partisan "does not have the rights and privileges of combatants; he is a criminal in common law, and may be rendered harmless by summary punishments and repressive measures" (Schmitt, 2004: 25). The second feature of the partisan is that it has intense political engagement. The intensity of this engagement is defined vis-à-vis an enemy. For him, the enemy is the prerequisite that distinguishes him from an ordinary criminal and thief (Schmitt, 2004: 14). The partisan's encounter is never with an individual enemy, but always with a public

enemy. The third feature of the partisan is mobility. “Agility, speed, and the sudden change of surprise attack and retreat” due to increased mobility are the basic features that distinguish the partisan (Schmitt, 2004: 16). Loyalty to the land is the last characteristic that characterizes the partisan. The telluric features are both a balancing and limiting element on the actions of the partisan. For Schmitt, “it is significant for the essentially defensive situation of the partisan—despite his tactical mobility— whose nature changes when he identifies with the absolute aggressiveness of a world-revolutionary or technologizing ideology” (Schmitt, 2004: 20).

The partisan subject is the product of the modern world in which the *Jus Publicum Europeaum* has been disintegrated. However, his existence has become quite common. The partisan blurs the traditional distinction between soldier and civilian in a way that complicates his status as a combatant and makes it difficult to integrate international law into the rules of war. Thus, although distinctly modern and the basis of their existence lies in the exclusion of traditional forms of conflict, the partisan actually subverts such traditional forms, especially the traditional cornerstone of European international law (Müller, 2003: 148). The act of violence that reveals the partisan as a warrior depends on his ability to sacrifice himself for the people he represents. Moreover, his motivation is not an abstract universalist cause but defending his own land. To the extent that his actions are tied to his concrete and material foundations rather than abstract/universal claims, the partisan’s violence is justified. Last but not least, Schmitt’s partisan does not express a collective act of violence but rather a singular act representing the people for whom he sacrifices himself. In this sense, the partisan’s actions contain violence against an abstraction, which is closely related to Schmitt’s preference for Mao over Lenin.

The Purpose of Violence: The State

As discussed above, for Schmitt, the logic and form of violence serve a purpose that reveals the political character of the state and reproduces it. Therefore, the partisan character emerges as a political subject to the extent that it fulfills this purpose. In this context, Schmitt’s comparison of Mao and Lenin will provide a better understanding of the purpose of the act of violence as a comparison between the abstract revolutionary and the telluric partisan rather than a comparison of two communists. In

that sense, Schmitt distinguishes between revolutionary warrior and partisan in his partisan theory. The distinction between partisan and revolutionary, categorized as “the defensive-autochthonous defender of home” and “the aggressive international revolutionary activist” is discussed through distinctions such as absolute war-real war, absolute enemy-real enemy, civil war-colonial war (Schmitt, 2004: 30). Interpreting the partisan as the typical figure of colonial wars and the revolutionary warrior as the typical figure of civil wars, Schmitt gives Lenin as an example in latter sense. Leninism is called professional revolutionism because it evolves class antagonism into absolute class hostility and moralizes politics by including the just war doctrine and evaluates the revolutionary war as a real war and absolutizes it (Schmitt, 2004: 48-50).

It is precisely at this point that Schmitt distinguishes the Maoist revolutionary warrior from Lenin’s. The former is more in line with partisan theory due to his commitment to the land and the fact that he is fighting with a limited, not absolute, and concrete enemy (Schmitt, 2004: 55-56). The fundamental element that Schmitt distinguishes the partisan from the revolutionary warrior is universality. The partisan is committed to Nomos, not universality. He is a local warrior due to his territorial loyalty. While discussing Mao as a key theorist in *Theory of the Partisan*, Schmitt pays particular attention to his works between 1927-38 and favors his works between 1936-38 (Schmitt, 2004: 55). Among them, “Strategy of Partisan War against the Japanese Invasion” in 1938 is important for Schmitt because it reveals the differences between the communisms of Soviet Russia and China. Here, Mao provides a criticism of the One World understanding and presents the pluralist image of the new mind of the world. First of all, “Mao’s revolution is fundamentally more telluric than Lenin’s” (Schmitt, 2004: 57). The differences between the Bolshevik avant-gardists of the October 1917 Revolution and the communists of the 1949 Chinese Revolution are revealed not only in the internal structure of the group but also in their relations with the lands and people they conquered (Schmitt, 2004: 57-58). Moreover, according to Schmitt, Mao combined a concrete defense of territory against capitalist colonialism with a universal and abstract Marxist concept of class struggle, thus leaving Lenin behind in theoretical consciousness (Schmitt, 2004: 58-59). The coexistence of different types of hostility in Mao is essential since “racial enmity against the white colonial exploiter; class enmity against the capitalist

bourgeoisie; national enmity against the Japanese intruder of the same race; internecine enmity nursed in long, embittered civil wars” coexists in his writings (Schmitt, 2004: 59). These different forms of hostility confirm each other and prove that concrete rather than abstract hostility comes to the fore. Ultimately, Schmitt’s subject, who decides on the state of exception, finds his embodiment in Mao’s concrete, local, and different forms of hostility. He further expresses Mao’s differences as follows:

In comparison to the concrete telluric reality of the Chinese partisan, Lenin has something abstract and intellectual [*abstrak-intellektuelles*] in his definition of the enemy. The ideological conflict between Moscow and Peking, which has grown ever stronger since 1962, has its deepest origin in the concretely varying [*konkretverschiedenen*] reality of true partisanship. In this respect, too, the theory of the partisan proves to be the key to recognizing political reality (Schmitt, 2004: 61).

Considering Schmitt’s selective treatment of Mao, it becomes clear that his theory has limitations for emancipatory and transformative politics. Although Schmitt, who in a similar vein to Badiou, deals with the political outside the existing party-politics and in a rupture-decision process, his political subject is the sovereign, and the sovereign becomes a subject only through the violent decision that gives the state its political existence. The partisan reproduces the existing structure by reducing the politics into a continuation of the war. It ensures the continuity of this state. But a question still needs to be answered: What is the alternative?

Badiou’s Militant(s)

A vivid academic debate surrounds Badiou’s relationship to Maoism. It would not be wrong to claim that his Maoism has been a much more discussed subject, as opposed to his problematic approach to Marxism. If one of the reasons for this veritable interest is related to Badiou’s consistent acknowledgment of his Maoist roots, another one is the long-lost, forgotten name of Mao itself. As Badiou (2015) readily accepts, being a “Maoist does not mean anything today”. Thus, it is no surprise that his insistence on being a Maoist in the present tense, “for the Maoist that I am” (Bosteel, 2005: 576), attracts many scholars’ attention. Therefore, one should first address the Chinese leader’s role to make sense of Badiou’s approach to politics.

Central to Badiou's Maoism is the claim that the period following the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution is the third period in the history of Marxism (Badiou, 2009: 128). As Boncardo (2020: 131) points out, the Cultural Revolution, albeit registered as a failed attempt, signifies how Maoism could mobilize the masses to forge a new form of communism to overcome the limits of the dominant socialist party-state model. Between 1968 and 1978, which Badiou (2010: 60) refers to as the "red years", Mao's conception of revolutionary organization inspired a renewal of the Marxist theory and practice. Three elements inherent to Mao's thinking, his emphasis on the role of contradiction, his emphasis on the role of the masses in politics, and finally his willingness to leave the party-state form out of his revolutionary practice render him an ever-present figure for Badiou. As will be discussed in the following sections, these elements are also intimately related to the notion of violence in his thought.

However, it would be mistaken to argue that the Maoist lineage in Badiou's works has been unaltered since his first engagement with the "Union des Communistes Français Marxiste-Léniniste" between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. On the contrary, Toscano (2006: 12-13) argues that his works could be chronologically analyzed in four consecutive phases: pre-1968, the stage of "theoretical communism"; 1968-1977, the UCFML period of "communism of production"; 1977-1982, the publication of *Theory of the Subject* and the following years of "communism of destruction" and finally 1982 to present "generic communism" which is communism qua "eternity of the equal" (Badiou, 2018:116). Similarly, while acknowledging the continuing impact of Mao on Badiou's ideas, Bosteel (2005: 576) presents his recent works as post-Maoist.

Regardless of which periodization one follows, Badiou's admiration for the Cultural Revolution is unvarying. Calling it "the last revolution", he (2005:487) regards the Cultural Revolution as "the historical development of a contradiction" and claims that our debt to the Chinese revolutionaries remains enormous. Nonetheless, as Liu states (2011: 642), Badiou's unflinching defense of the Cultural Revolution as a sign of his commitment to the idea of communism always takes precedence over the actual consequences of the decade-long upheaval in China. Although he never denies the destructive and violent episodes of the Revolution (Badiou, 2005: 494-

495), his support for Mao's slogan "without destruction, there is no construction" remains intact. And yet, as the careful reader would recognize, for Badiou, the self-evident negativity of the slogan is only superficial. To him, both the Cultural Revolution and Mao's slogan are inherently paradoxical calls for the positive creation of a new subject. They are paradoxical to the extent that this process, far from being a rational process, must involve the impasses of violence. But then, what distinguishes it from the sheer brutal force? To answer this question, we need to take a closer look at the role of violence in Badiou's politics.

The Subtractive Logic of Violence: Politics and the Event

Unlike Schmitt, whose return to contemporary discussions was only possible thanks to his conception of the political, Badiou clearly states that his preoccupation is with politics. The political, he argues, needs to be treated as "a fiction", creating an illusionary relationship between communal ties and sovereign authority over society. Thus, the so-called retreat of the political is, in fact, a welcoming event that provides the opportunity to recover the determinacy of politics. In other words, underlying Badiou's theory is the autonomy of politics from the political. After all, "*the political* is never anything but the fiction in which *politics* makes the hole of the event" (Badiou, 2018: 31, emphasis in original).

Undoubtedly, the event is Badiou's most cited concept. Without delving into the discussions surrounding his intricate philosophical undertaking, one can define the event as the moment of opening a new possibility within a given situation. For Badiou (2013: 9), the event "is something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable". Hence, far from being a regular continuity of any logical routines, the event "interrupts the law, the structure of the situation" (Badiou, 2005b: 175). Considering that all events are abnormal and that neither naturalness nor neutrality is intrinsic to them, the event becomes a moment that both defies given normality and stability and serves as a harbinger of a possibility not anymore in the order of the old but that of the new.

Badiou is well aware that violence is an essential part of the event. In fact, he (2007: 13) warns that "you cannot expect politics to be soft-hearted, progressive, and peaceful if it aims at the radical subversion of the eternal order that submits society to the domination of the wealth and the rich, of power and the powerful, of science and

the scientist, of capital and its servants”. Taking Maoist watchword “it is right to rebel against reactionaries”, Badiou acknowledges the essential relationship between the creation of the new and the destruction of the old. Nonetheless, his approach to the existing antagonism is far from promoting a superfluous kind of violence. Rather, his theory splits each antagonism into a destructive and a subtractive variant (Toscano, 2006: 15). While the former “undertakes the indefinite task of purification”, the latter “attempts to measure the ineluctable negativity” (Badiou, 2007b: 54). The logic of destruction is based on the imperative of annihilating the current situation. The intensification of the combat and the eradication of the enemy at all costs, the primary features of destruction, result in a paradigm of war. From this point of view, what is perceived as the real is intact and consistent, except for the impurities it contains. Thus, its logic functions only to cleanse and authenticate the real. Bringing the desired order back to the real, or what Badiou calls “the passion of the real” is the uncontrollable charm of terror. The object of terrorism is the elimination of the obstacle for the real and not the real itself. In that respect, Schmitt’s concept of the political is the perfect articulation of destructive logic.

The subtractive variant, however, works on the logic of disqualification. Against the idea of a pure real, subtraction addresses the excess already present in the real. The excess reveals what the destructive logic fails to grasp: the real is neither pure nor unified. On the contrary, it is only a “minimal difference” (Badiou, 2007b: 65). Therefore, subtraction as disqualification unravels the idea of a decidable real. The minimal difference, the real’s defining characteristic, comes very close to indifference, which makes it “a vanishing term that constitutes it” (Badiou, 2007b: 65). As opposed to the maximal negating power of the destructive logic, subtraction seeks “to invent content at the very place of the minimal difference (Badiou, 2007b: 57). For Badiou, this is the affirmative or creative potential of violence. Thus, for politics to happen, mere negation is never sufficient. Still loyal to Mao’s slogan, his politics requires a balance between subtraction and destruction: “The opening of a space of creation requires destruction” (Badiou, 2009b: 396). However, there is still the question of the form of violence. Here, Badiou once more follows Mao’s guidance by submitting to the power of the people.

The Mass Movement Form of Violence: The Militants

It is no coincidence that Badiou's works always associate the subtractive logic of violence with historical revolutions. Whether it is the French Revolution or the Polish Workers' movement of the late 1970s, he insists on the collective role of the masses in bringing about the emergence of politics in the form of the event. In fact, except for the emblematic figure of St. Paul, Badiou's political subject is never an individual but decisively the masses. He sees a strong correlation between the realization of the subtractive logic and the element of contingency defining mass movements. As he (2009:63) states, "the mass movement is the vanishing term of the eventual concatenation". However, the masses' "memorable lucidity" prevents them from establishing a lasting institution. In other words, the nature of the masses is the opposite of the "*state of affairs*" (Badiou, 2009: 64, emphasis in original), and precisely through this quality, the political subject, the militant, emerges.

The paradoxical character of the political subject, its power to create but not to institutionalize the new, aligns with the event from which he emerges. The essence of the event is the revealing of the excess, which the state of the situation prevents from surfacing. While this serves to create a sense of normality and stability (Badiou, 2005b: 98), it indeed obscures the very truth: "The state is not founded upon the social bond, which it would express, but rather upon un-binding which it prohibits" (Badiou, 2005b: 109). Just as the event can be nothing but an exception, the post-evental subject cannot be a constitutive element of any order. The political subject, then, is the one who declares and affirms this truth, and in doing so, he simultaneously chooses to remain outside of any structure promising consistency: "The being of the mass movement is to disappear, and we must accept that it appears without a trace on the vast stages of historical space" (Badiou, 2009: 64).

Yet, it is critical to distinguish the vanishing quality of the masses from the militant character of their actions. Badiou is very clear that his emphasis on the disappearance, the resistance to institutionalizing the truth, should not be mistaken for a fleeting nature. On the contrary, Badiou attributes three rigorous characteristics to his militant subjects: confidence and fidelity to truth, hope and perseverance in the emancipatory trajectory, and universality and traversal of the differences. Insofar as these three qualities define the use and the limits of the form of violence, they necessitate a closer analysis.

The first is confidence. Clearly inspired by Mao's statement, "we must have confidence in the masses" (Badiou, 2009: 330), Badiou defines this characteristic in relation to a pre-political disposition of willingness to respond to events as subjects. However, as Boncardo (2020: 144) points out, confidence draws its force from the fundamental contingency of political conflict. Knowing in advance whether a moment of political change would engender emancipation is impossible. Hence, confidence is the name for the endless potential of progressive forces. Fidelity, on the other hand, is what Badiou (2018: 78) calls "the political organization, that is, the collective product of post-evental consistency beyond its immediate sphere". It is the "law of a truth" (Badiou, 2003: 90).

If confidence and fidelity render the masses into militants of truth, the second characteristic, hope, sustains political subjectivity over time. Badiou (2003: 95) defines hope as the "enduring fidelity." By pertaining to perseverance, hope ensures the continuation of the subjective process. In other words, the masses' resistance to any structural ordering of their vanishing quality results from their enduring fidelity. Badiou warns that hope has nothing to do with a future reward. Rather, it is a "figure of the present subject, who is affected in return by the universality for which he works" (Badiou, 2003: 97). The militant subject exists only insofar as the truth that constitutes him is universal. Thus, his last characteristic is his concern with universality. This understanding of universalism is a generic one to the extent that it is thoroughly inclusive. "*An indifference that tolerates differences*" is the working principle of such generic universalism (Badiou, 2003: 99, emphasis in original). For Badiou, nothing could be further away from the truth than the banal expression of there are differences. Thus, it is imperative for the militants to traverse differences without having to give up that which allows them to recognize themselves in the world.

The form of violence that emerges through the mass movements is the direct outcome of the universal truth that Badiou seeks throughout his writings. He (2005b: xiii) states that the militant subject, the bearer of fidelity to the event of truth, is "working for the emancipation of humanity in its entirety". Perhaps this statement itself might be sufficient to explain the purpose of violence in his theory. However, a question still needs to be answered: What stands against the emancipation of humanity?

The Purpose of Violence: Beyond the State

As Toscano (2006: 22-23) points out, the thesis of politics at a distance from the state is central to Badiou's theory. In that sense, the gist of politics lies in its capacity to reveal the excess that the state obscures from an extrinsic position without transforming into a legal, bureaucratic, or military power. Perhaps it is only natural to expect a critical stance towards the state from a self-professed communist thinker like Badiou. However, what makes his analysis of the state interesting is not the infamous complexity of his ontological approach but rather how he contests the Marxist-Leninist organization of political power within the same critical analysis. Put differently, like Schmitt, understanding the role of violence vis-à-vis the state in Badiou's theory requires one to visit his comparison between Leninist and Maoist forms of politics.

But first, we need to clarify the meaning of the state for Badiou. One explicit definition is available in *Theory of the Subject*: "The state is the causal result of the vanishing of the masses. (...) Socialist or not, the state guarantees nothing with regard subjective effectuation of communism" (Badiou, 2009: 235). Thus, for him, the greatest obstacle awaiting emancipatory politics is the state in all of its possible forms. Badiou argues that Lenin was already aware of the danger that the state posed. Any modern state, including a socialist one, is intrinsically bourgeois. Therefore, his reverence for Lenin as a militant figure is unshakable. However, it is the Leninist party, the answer to the question of what becomes the victorious revolution of 1917? that causes his reservations towards Leninism. For Badiou (2009: 205), not only the Leninist party is "incommensurable to the task of transition to communism", but by being "capable of becoming a bourgeois party" it no longer holds any legitimacy.

The Maoist dictum of struggling against the two bourgeoisie, the old and the new, and its realization via the Cultural Revolution represent a paradoxical resolution to the inherent contradiction of the Leninist party. According to Badiou, this paradox was apparent in the contradictory programme of the Revolution. On the one hand, it stood for "the mass revolutionary action in the margins of the state of dictatorship of the proletariat" (Badiou, 2005: 487). This was the people's measure against the bourgeoisie organizing itself within the communist party itself. On the other hand,

Mao was still the leader of the party. Hence, the source of the paradox: the rebel in power (Badiou, 2005: 506).

To what extent, then the violence that the Cultural Revolution caused is justified for Badiou? As discussed earlier, despite the transforming Maoism of his thought, “the red years” preserve an indispensable place insofar as they “invite us to name the party of a new type, the post-Leninist party” (Badiou, 2009: 205). Therefore, the Cultural Revolution remains as the event revealing the truth of emancipatory politics: “affirming a politics without a party” (Badiou, 2005: 507). Thus, one can conclude that violence is an integral part of Badiou’s politics only to the extent that it designates a separation from the state and, in doing so, opens the possibility of an egalitarian and emancipatory politics based on the principle of organized capacity of the masses.

Conclusion

As the introductory remarks mention, various studies offer a comprehensive framework that engages with Schmitt’s and Badiou’s works. For many of them, the striking commonalities between the two thinkers, such as the role of exception, the necessity for a decision, and its inherent relation to the formation of the political subject along with its heroic depiction, form a sufficient ground to present their comparative analysis. Although these analyses significantly contribute to our understanding of Schmitt and Badiou, one question remains unanswered: How do we explain the root cause of the unneglectable similarities between Schmitt and Badiou, who clearly represent the two opposites of the political spectrum?

In search of an answer, this study argued that the notion of violence constitutes the missing foundation in comparing the two theorists. Moreover, it also pointed out that Schmitt’s and Badiou’s shared interest in Mao provides a better understanding of how violence is contextualized in their works. For both theoretician violence inherently constitutes the essence of the political. While Schmitt’s logic of violence is destructive in its obsession to maintain order, for Badiou, it is subtractive precisely to disrupt order. Consequently, while the former opts for a local, warlike, and militaristic form of violence, the latter always associates the violence stemming from the masses’ movements with fidelity to a universal truth. Finally, whereas for Schmitt, violence is necessary to re-establish the power of the status quo, for the French post-Maoist emancipatory politics always requires a distance from the state.

In today's capitalist state order, Schmitt's destructive violence is still compatible with authoritarian liberalism embodied in a strong state and sound economy (Bonefeld, 2016). Moreover, the importance of returning to Schmitt's partisan subject is still emphasized in both the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods (Goodson, 2004: 1; Hooker, 2009: 161; Toscano, 2008; Werner, 2009: 126). In a world where it is no longer easy or, in fact, even possible to distinguish the defenders of the status quo from those who struggle for emancipation, maybe we should lend an ear to Badiou (2005b: xiii) one last time.

The militant of a truth is not only the political militant working for the emancipation of humanity in its entirety. He or she is also the artist-creator, the scientist who opens up a new theoretical field, or the lover whose world is enchanted.

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