

I was born in 1944, the year in which Ancona was liberated by the Polish and the United States. The docks and the shipyard were totally destroyed, but the workers and the political and economic forces had a great will to rebuild. One of my earliest memories that I have is of the British military passing by my house on Amendola Street in 1946. They came to salute the families because they were leaving to return home, they had finished fighting the war, and there was a great desire for fraternity, mutual understanding and harmony.

The town was very passionate about political life especially in subversive politics: here, a hundred years ago the "Red Week" occurred and six years later (in 1920) the riflemen revolted because they refused to go and fight in Albania. They rebelled against their officers, and before Fascism there was a subversive movement that refused to go to war. At least there's a part of people from Ancona who live on through history.

Between the ages of ten and twelve (since I started working at thirteen), during 1955 and 1956, there were some tragic events (the Suez War in Egypt, the uprising in Hungary and the repression) my friends and I either went to the Italian Communist Party's quarters, because we could play billiards and table tennis there, or to the church's sport's field. We lived in a neighbourhood where there was a rivalry, the priest asked us: "How come you go to the Italian Communist Party quarters?" and others: "How come you go to church?" Everybody knew each other, but the rivalry was strong.

The problem in life is being able to choose, not being chosen. This seems to be the issue for me – not being compelled to do what others decide but having the right to an education, to a culture, to knowledge, to be able to choose, this is what society should offer. I felt that way at 14 years old and I still feel that way now.

The process of unifying Europe is a great historical feat. However, the Union was made under the hand of the dominant classes. The European government is a display of governments and not Parliament: there is a lack of democracy.

Enrico Berlinguer was the model of righteousness, honesty and even with his family relationships his vision was marked by cohesion.

I organized the first strike at the place where I worked when I was sixteen: the Tambroni government was in power and demonstrations were exploding all over Italy. There were deaths in Palermo and Reggio Emilia. We kids at the factory would shout out loud "Death to Tambroni," because we never wasted time with niceties. I had an older man in front of me, who knocked me with his elbow and smacked me over the head saying: "You shouldn't say things like that." I found out afterwards that he was a partisan leader, he had fought in Spain in the Republican ranks and was obviously a representative of the Communist Party. But we young ones continued to shout. We didn't care about anything that the "elders" were saying.

In the 60s I was twenty, those were the years of the Vietnam War. This marked my, our existence and forced us to rethink our direction. We thought that the concept of war was over. During the war in Europe, the United States played the role of liberators. American officials had always thought of Latin America as their back garden and were now talking about Asia but there was this full-blown intervention. Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, more than 500 thousand soldiers, the use of sophisticated weaponry, defoliants, all things that still weigh on the life and economy of the country. These actions have forced us to reevaluate our behaviour. Communists came away from the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat,

the role of the USSR was crucial for that, and then wanted to be advocates of democracy and confront the historical realities; we strayed from our initial sources, because gradually we discovered that the real revolution was spreading democracy. It was the war and repression of the U.S. in Vietnam that resulted in rekindling the Cold War. At that time we worked long and hard, to overcome this opposition. We did not depart from the ideals; we departed from a historical practice that had departed from the ideals! The theory was that of human liberation. What is the principle we live by? Equality, we are all equal. Differences can be of culture, abilities, desires, but we all have the same starting point, the same opportunity to form a personality; the knowledge of living with our abilities and not exploiting others. This is the basic principle, as children we embraced these ideas and lived by them. I prefer equality to socialism or communism, because throughout history people have assumed different meanings and in many ways have even contradicted them, we must be aware of them.

In Ancona in 1972, the earthquake rendered ten thousand homes uninhabitable. After a few years the city was still at a standstill, it had not resumed, this meant that the city council gave rise to a new majority. After many years, there were Communists living alongside Socialists and Republicans, they have created unique relationships and traditions here. We were able to invest the available money in order to restructure and restore most of this city and give it a democratic change. The districts of Ancona formed neighbourhood committees, hundreds of people conducted voluntary and free work to build parks and fix schools. The participation of citizens emerging from their confined circles is now dedicated to the common good. This, in the years 1972, 1977 and 1978, was a nice change and an impressive step.

Berlinguer – it is a well-known fact that he preferred to devote himself to the study of foreign politics, on which he was a great expert. He did not particularly like going to parliament every day. In my opinion, throughout history people have been more interested in the leading roles of a social class rather than others in the group. Adelmo Matteucci, a shipyard worker in Castracan, is a prime example. He had spent the entire period of fascism having to keep quiet and after the war he taught the younger ones, teaching them sentences taken from the Capital. He said that they did not have to study Marx as a work of economics but as a work of philosophy, as a science that teaches life without becoming a part of the bourgeoisie but maintaining their identity as workers.

Does the person who governs realise what it means to wake up to uncertainty every morning? Which loss of value does it imply? I belong to a political defeat and I believe I am aware of that. We would like people to start doing what we did forty years ago without having reverential fears.

I have worked in Algeria, performing managerial functions. While I'd get more economic satisfaction working there, I would have been living a lie, after having met the Italian community living and working in Algeria no more than twice, I couldn't bear to see them again. A troublesome lot, each trying to cheat their employer – a community of businessmen abroad, it is best to stay away. However, I also had other opportunities to get to know some Algerian people who were full of drive. Maybe they could give rise to a different life.

The history of the twentieth century is a dramatic story of massacres, not only through wars but through colonialism. We pretend not to know about certain things. The small country of Belgium killed 10,000,000 people at the start of 1900. Of course, it also has a grand history (culture, discoveries), but what's left of the twentieth century is a cold legacy

of which little is known. Nowadays there is a rejection of history and knowledge, we are returning to the power of the ruling classes: governments without democracy, with a lack of participation. Furthermore, we see big contradictions because the youth travel, study and speak different languages. It is not easy to recount history, especially to a young person, not if you do not want to make it all seem banal or sentimental; the twentieth century is a great tragedy.

Gramsci said “the pessimism of the intellect to analyse, the optimism of the will to change the situation”. While you practice pessimism of intellect with a certain ease, practicing optimism of the will is a bit more complicated because the mechanisms of consent are more difficult to break. The ideas are always the same, also because I do not really relate them to a political theory, i.e. Marxism – the general guidelines (social equality, human rights, right to work, to knowledge) will always run through the soul of people.

Maybe we live in the best part of the world. The great thinkers came from here; they are part of the European people. But you cannot make a new continent without any rights, unless it has a social component, a common vision – if I have to go to Madrid I should feel at home, not like a foreign body, just like a person who comes here should feel at home. I wish that were the case for everyone.

Let's say there is paradise, that we do go to heaven, from heaven I can then (an image of many neorealism films) hear one of my grandchildren say: "My grandfather tried to change the world; he did not succeed; now I must try too!" That would be satisfaction with life.