

THE FALSE RESOURCE OF ACTIVISM

Second part of the Meeting of Milan, September the 7th 1952

Translated by ICP – “The Internationalist Proletarian”

www.pcielcomunista.org

1.- A usual objection, that is at its turn not original, but that has already accompanied the worst degeneration episodes of the movement, is that which underestimates the clarity and continuity in the terrain of the principles, and encourages to “be political”, to plunge in the activity of the movement (which will show the path to follow), to not stop to decide copying texts and analyzing precedent experiences, but to advance with no truce in the heat of the action.

2.- At the same time, this practicism is a deformation of Marxism, whether by willing to bring to the foreground the spirit of decision and vivacity of leading and vanguard groups with not many doctrinal scruples, whether by redirecting to a decision and a consultation “of the class” and its majorities, pretending to choose the path that, pushed by the economic interest, the majority of workers prefer. These are old tricks, and no traitor sold to the dominant class has ever left without sustaining, first, that he was the best and most active “practical” advocate of the workers’ interests, and, secondly, that he acted this way because of the manifested will of the mass of his supporters... or electors.

3.- The revisionist deviation, for instance the evolutionist, reformist and legalistic one of Bernstein, in depth was activist and not ultra-deterministic. It didn’t aim to substitute the vast revolutionary goal for the little that the situation allowed the workers to obtain, but to close the eyes in front of the burning vision of the historical arch and say: the result of the moment is everything, let us propose ourselves – not universally but locally and transitorily – immediate and reduced goals, and it will be possible to shape these results with the will. The unionists that supported violence *à la Sorel* said the same thing, and had the same end. The first ones aimed more to pull legal parliamentary measures; the second ones to obtain victories at a company or category level. Both turned their backs to the historical tasks.

4.- All those and other thousand forms of “eclecticism”, that is, of the claimed freedom to change fronts and doctrine corpuses, started with a falsification: they considered that such a continuous rectification of the shooting line, or route change, was to be found in the orientation and in the texts of Marx and Engels. In all our work, with abundance of deep studies and quotations, we have shown the continuity of this line, stressing, among other things, that the work and the most

recent texts refer themselves, with the same wording and the same sense, to the passages and fundamental theories of the first texts.

5.- It is therefore a void legend that of the two successive "souls" of Marx. According to it, the young one would have still been idealistic, voluntarist, Hegelian and, under the influence of the last tremors of the bourgeois revolutions, "barricader" and insurrectionist. The mature one would have turned into a cold researcher of contemporaneous economical phenomena, positive, evolutionist and legalistic. On the contrary, the repeated deviations, whose long series we have many times illustrated (whether they present themselves in the banal meaning as extremist or moderate) have been those that, not resisting the revolutionary tension of dialectical materialism, have fallen again in an equally bourgeois deviation, of idealistic, individualistic, "spreader of consciousness" nature, whose gossipy activity, both concrete and secondary, is passivity (better said, irrevocable revolutionary impotence) at a historical scale.

6.- It would suffice to remember the final conclusion of the first volume of *Das Kapital*, where the expropriation of the expropriators is described, which shows – as a note indicates – not being more than a repetition of the corresponding passage of the *Manifesto*. The economic theories of the second and third volume are nothing else but developments over the same stump of the theory of value and surplus value given in the first volume, with the same terms, formulae and even the same symbols, and Antonio Graziadei attempted to break this unity in vain. It is also of a fictitious kind the separation between the analytical and the descriptive part of capitalism, and the programmatic part of the conquest of socialism. All those that degenerated demonstrated not having ever grasped the power of the Marxist critique to utopism, as they neither grasped the critique of democratism. We are not talking about drafting a purpose and remain satisfied after having dreamt it, or hope that the pink color of the dream will move everyone to make it real, but of finding the end that must be solidly and physically reached, and directly aim to it, sure that human blindness and unconsciousness will not impede to reach it.

7.- It is certainly fundamental that Marx established the link (already felt by the best utopists) between this far realization and the current physical movement of a social class already in struggle: the modern proletariat. But this is not enough to understand all the dynamics of class revolution. If all the construction of Marx's work, which he was not allowed to finish himself, is known, it can be seen that he reserved to crown it this problem of the type and of the impersonal activity of the class, which was however already clear in his thought and in his texts.

With this treaty all the economic and social construction is crowned according to the method that has allowed to establish it.

8.- It would not suffice to say that Marxist determinism eliminates as root causes of historical facts (once again: root cause and operating agent not to be confused) the quality and the activity of the thought or the struggle of men of exceptional value, simply moving the ideal factors of consciousness and of collectiveness from one to many men. This would be to go from an aristocratic to a demo-popular philosophy, even more far from ours than the former. We are talking about inverting the placement of the cause and transfer it outside the ideal consciousness, to the physical and material fact.

9.- The Marxist thesis states that it is not possible, first of all, that the conscience of the historical path appears anticipated in one human brain alone, and that for two reasons: the first is that the conscience does not follow but precedes the *being*, that is, the material conditions that surround the subject of the own conscience; the second one is that all the forms of social conscience come from – with some degree of delay so that the necessary time for the general determination exists – analogous and parallel circumstances consisting in the economic relations in which the masses of individuals are found, which form therefore a social class. These are historically carried to “act together” much before they can “think together”. The theory between this relation between the class conditions and the class action with its future goal is not asked to anybody, in the sense that it is not asked to an author or isolated leader, and not even “to all the class” as a simple and momentaneous addition of individuals in a given country or moment, and even less it could be deducted from a very bourgeois “consultation” inside the class.

10.- The dictatorship of the proletariat is not for us a consulting democracy introduced inside the proletariat, but an organized historical force that, in a given moment, followed by a part of the proletariat, and even not by the biggest one, expresses the material pressure, which bursts the old bourgeois production mode to clear the path to the new communist mode of production.

In all this it is not of secondary importance the factor, always indicated by Marx, constituted by the class deserters of the dominant class which pass to the revolutionary field and counterfeit the weight of whole masses of proletarians that remain at the service of the bourgeoisie as a result of their material and ideological slavery, masses that almost always represent the statistical majority of the class.

11.- All the balance of the revolution in Russia does not lead in any way our current to attribute its passive to the violation of internal democracy of the class, or to have doubts of Marxist and Leninist theory of the dictatorship, which does not have as judge or limit any constitutional or organizational formulae, but only to the historical relation of forces.

On the contrary, the complete abandonment of the class dictatorship terrain is precisely made clear in the complete Stalinist alteration of the revolutionary method. Not less than the rest of the ex-communists everywhere they pass over to the terrain of the democracy, they place themselves in the terrain of the popular and national democracy, and in Russia as well as outside it they abandon with all their politics the class purposes for national purposes, which is even acknowledged by the current vulgar description of their politics as a simple net of espionage of the Russian state, beyond its borders. Whoever tries the democratic way starts to follow the capitalist way. And it is also so with the vague anti-Stalinists that shout in the name of the proletarian opinion trampled in Russia.

12.- The quotations of Marx that demonstrate this impersonality of the factor of the historical event, without which the theory of its materiality would be impossible to propose, would be countless.

We know that Marx only completed the first book of his great work *Das Kapital*. In the letters and prefaces, Engels reminds the harsh work that was required to order the second and third volumes (leaving the fourth aside, which is a history of the adverse economic doctrines).

Engels himself had doubts about the order of the chapters and sections of the two books that study the process as a whole of the forms of capitalism, not to "describe" the capitalism of Marx's time, but to demonstrate that, no matter what happens, the form of the general process does not head equilibrium situations and a "state of regime" (as would be that of an evergreen and constant river without droughts nor floods), but to a series of crisis every time more acute and to the revolutionary fall of the examined "general form".

13.- As he indicated in 1859 preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, first redaction of *Das Kapital*, after having treated the three fundamental classes of modern society (landowners, capitalists, proletarians), Marx reserved other three issues: "State, international commerce, world market". The issue of the State can be found in the text about the Paris Commune of 1871 and in the classical chapters of Engels, as well as in *The State and Revolution*, and the issue of "international commerce" in *The Imperialism* by Lenin. It was the work of a historical school and not the *Opera Omnia* of one person. The issue of the "world market", to which an almost dead Stalin referred with the weak theory of the double market, flares today in the book of facts, which does not know how to read: it is here that the fuses of the fire that world capitalism will present in the second half of the century could be found, if the researchers would not have run behind the fate of Homelands and Peoples, and bankrupt ideological systems of the bourgeois

epoch: Peace, Liberty, Independence, Sanctity of the Person, constitutionality of the electoral decisions...!

14.- After having treated the way in which the social product is divided among the three fundamental classes forming their economic incomes (or, less exactly said, their revenues): rent, profit and salary; after having demonstrated that the transfer of the first one to the State would not change capitalist order, and that even the transfer of all the surplus value to the State would not go beyond the limits of the capitalist form of production (taking into account that the waste of living work, that is, the intensity and duration of work, would remain the same due to the company form and the mercantile system), Marx concludes this way the strictly economical part: *"The second distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production is the production of surplus-value as the direct aim and determining motive of production. Capital produces essentially capital, and does so only to the extent that it produces surplus-value."* (Das Kapital, Volume III, Chapter LI).

(Only communism will be able to produce surplus-product that is not transformed into capital).

But the root cause is not by any means the existence of the capitalist, or the capitalist class, which not only is a mere effect, but even an unnecessary effect.

"Whereas, on the basis of capitalist production, the mass of direct producers is confronted by the social character of their production in the form of strictly regulating authority and a social mechanism of the labor-process organized as a complete hierarchy (that is: bureaucratized! -note of redaction-) – this authority reaching its bearers, however, only as the personification of the conditions of labor in contrast to labor, and not as political or theocratic rulers as under earlier modes of production – among the bearers of this authority, the capitalists themselves, who confront one another only as commodity-owners, there reigns complete anarchy within which the social interrelations of production assert themselves only as an overwhelming natural law in relation to individual free will." (Ibidem)

Therefore, it is necessary to comply to the formidable invariance of the text in order to lockdown the alleged updaters in the darkness of the clumsiest bourgeois prejudice, that which looks for the responsible of all social inferiority in the "individual will", or at the most in the "collective responsibility of a social class", while, from then on, everything was perfectly clear, and the capitalist and the capitalist class could cease here to "personify" the capital, but it would continue to exist, in front of us and against us, as a "social mechanism", as an "overwhelming natural law" of the production process.

15.- This is the formidable and conclusive chapter LI which closes the "description" of the present economy, but that in each page "evokes" the specter of the revolution.

Next chapter LII, of a little more than a page, is that in which the tired Engels, below an interrupted line, wrote between square brackets: *"Here the manuscript breaks off."*

Title: "Classes". We are in the threshold of the reversal of the praxis; and once refused the individual will, we come to the quest of the agent of revolution.

To begin with, the chapter states: we have given the laws of pure capitalist society, with the mentioned three classes. But this one does not even exist in England (not even in 1953, there or in any other place, and will never exist, in the same way that the two unique material points bearing mass to which Newton's law reduces the cosmos).

"The first question to be answered is this: What constitutes a class?"

"At first glance – the identity of revenues and sources of revenue."

"However, from this standpoint, physicians and officials, e.g., would also constitute two classes, for they belong to two distinct social groups, the members of each of these groups receiving their revenue from one and the same source. The same would also be true of the infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labor splits laborers as well as capitalists and landlords-the latter, e.g., into owners of vineyards, farm owners, owners of forests, mine owners and owners of fisheries."

The thought and the period stop here. But it is enough.

16.- Without claiming author rights for any sentence, the crucial chapter, interrupted by death, an arbitrary individual incident for Karl Marx, who in that sense used to quote Epicurus, to whom, being a young little PhD student, he dedicated his thesis, can be completed. As Engels stated: "any event that derives from necessity embodies in itself its own consolation". Lamenting is worthless.

It is not the identities of the income sources, as it seems on a "first look", what defines a class.

Unionism, workerism, laborism, corporativism, Mazzinism, social-Christianism, whether from the past or the future, are demolished once and for all.

Our conquest went much further than the flabby acknowledgement by certain ideologists of the spirit and the individual, of the liberal society and the constitutional State, that there are and cannot be ignored collective interests of category. It was at the most a victory of ours the fact that, in front of the "social question", even so reduced to small pills, it was vain to turn the back to and close the eyes. This one was going to penetrate the modern world. But one thing is to invade it capillarily and another one to make it burst into pieces.

In the statistical frame, it is worthless to select "qualitatively" the classes according to the pecuniary source of its entries. It is even more stupid to select them quantitatively according to a "pyramid of incomes". From centuries ago, this last one has been erected; and the census of the State of Rome expressed, precisely, the scale of incomes. From centuries ago, simple arithmetical operations have demonstrated to the philosophers of the poverty that, by reducing the pyramid to a leveler prism of equal base, we would only found the society of the shabby.

How to get out qualitatively and quantitatively from these hundred thousand difficulties?: a high civil servant receives a salary; therefore, he is being paid in the given moment as a salaried pawn in a State salt marsh, but the former has a much higher income than many factory capitalists that live out of profit or than many traders, and the latter has a higher salary not only than a small working peasant, but also than a small house owner that lives out of his rents...

Class is not defined according to economic counts, but according to the historical position regarding the gigantic struggle with which the new general form of production overcomes, demolishes and substitutes the old one.

If the thesis that society in the pure addition of ideal individuals is idiotic, it is no less so the one that sustains that the class is the pure addition of economic individuals. Individual, class and society are not pure economic or ideal categories, but they change unstoppably depending on place and epoch, as products of a general process whose real laws are reproduced in the powerful Marxist construction.

The effective social mechanism leads and shapes individuals, classes and societies, without "consulting" them of no plan.

Class is defined by its historical path and task; and our class, due to the arduous and dialectical arriving point of its enormous effort, is *mainly* defined by the claim of its own and total quantitative and qualitative disappearance (because the disappearance in course of the enemy classes represents little or nothing).

In front of us, the whole of the class assumes today without pause changing meanings: nowadays it is for Stalin, for a capitalist State such as the Russian one, for a gang of candidates and parliamentarians much more anti-Marxists than the Turati's and Bissolati's, Longuet or Millerand of the past.

17.- It remains, therefore, nothing else but *the party* as current organ that defines the class, that fights for the class, that rules for the class in its moment and that prepares the end of the governments and classes. Provided that the party does not belong to this or the other so-and-so, that it does not nourish itself from the admiration to the leader, that it defends again, *if it is necessary with blind faith*, the

invariable theory, the rigid organization, the method that does not derive from a sectarian pre-concept, but that knows that in a society developed in its type form (be it Europe of year 1900, or Israel of year zero) the war formula is harshly applied: that who is not with us is against us.