

New Orientation on the Path of the Reconstitution of the Communist Party

II. CONSCIOUSNESS AND REVOLUTION

One of the most important aspects of the review of our trajectory is that it has helped us to take a step further in the understanding of the nature of the Reconstitution and its meaning as a political process, in the knowledge of what we are dealing with as a vanguard detachment and in our political activity as a conscious activity guided by revolutionary science. In this progress, we have managed to acquire a better understanding of the obstacles of ideological and political nature that we are coming across in the path of the Reconstitution, as well as the nature of the necessary means to overcome them. And the reflection on the ideological environment surrounding the Reconstitution of the Communist Party leads us, finally, to the question of its place as a historical process.

We began this document by describing our situation as an organized detachment of the ideological vanguard, immersed in a process of recapitulation and summation on the capacity and degree of fulfillment of the political tasks derived from the Plan of Reconstitution. Next, we introduced a historical evaluation on the transformation of some socio-political requirements among the premises of the revolutionary cycle in comparison with that of October and from the point of view of the revolutionary political subject, fundamentally those related to the qualitatively higher political constitution of the revolutionary vanguard (as a Communist Party and not only as a theoretical vanguard) as a necessary prerequisite for the beginning of the new cycle. The rest of the text, in a way, is nothing more than the consideration and, as far as possible, a description of the necessary means and instruments—including the rectification of those already found unsuitable—that will allow us to move on from our present tribulations to the fulfillment of those **new** requirements that are a condition for the opening of the next revolutionary cycle. We return, then, to that historical and theoretical problematic that tried to define the qualitatively superior form of unity between the vanguard theory and the social movement as a *proletarian party of a new type*—or, in other words, the form that the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat adopts as a subjective expression of the self-consciousness of the social being in the process of self-transformation. However, on this occasion, we will not adopt the objective point of view, that is to say, the one that is situated before that process of theory–practice fusion that culminates in the Communist Party from the external contemplation of its dialectical unfolding. This time, we will adopt the subjective point of view, which observes that unfolding internally from the position of the conscious subject, from the consideration of the itinerary followed by theory in that evolution. We are speaking, then, about the contradiction between consciousness and being in its development until its total solution, considering the social being as an independent factor and paying attention to the process in terms of

consciousness. In short, it is a question of the different positions that consciousness adopts in its dialectical relation with the social being until a **superior form of unity** is reached.

The historical place of the Reconstitution

“Contradiction is ordinarily the first to be kept away from things, away from any existent and from the true; as the saying goes, *there is nothing contradictory*. For the rest, it is relegated to subjective reflection which allegedly first posits it by way of reference and comparison. And even within this reflection it is not really there, for the *contradictory* cannot supposedly be *represented* or *thought*. Whether it occurs in actuality or in the reflection of thought, it is universally reckoned as an accident, an abnormality as it were, a momentary fit of sickness.”¹

In this quotation, Hegel shows us the first and most primitive form of the contradiction between being and consciousness. Here, contradiction is not recognized as something objective, but only as the *negative*, **critical** position of the subject with respect to objectivity. Contradiction is then, at most, the **subjective negation** of consciousness with respect to reality. This is, in general, the gnoseological basis of the moralistic criticism that dominated the non-religious schools of thought over the centuries, from the classical Greeks to Kant; that is to say, one of the instruments shaping the false consciousness dominant in all historical societies, including the bourgeois one. And, in particular, from the point of view of social thought, it is also the basis of the thinking of all the utopian reformers, from the humanists (More, Campanella...) to the socialists of the 19th century (Cabet, Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon...). It is under these parameters, certainly, how the critical activity of the bourgeois intelligentsia develops. Its main characteristic is that it is an anti-dialectical, dogmatic mode of thought: it does not conceive reality in movement, as a flux of contradictions, but in a static way; contradiction is not an attribute of objectivity, but a “momentary” activity of subjectivity. It goes without saying that, here, thought and world are alien to each other—their relation is totally external, their reciprocal influences cannot be assimilated. According to this mode of thought, any subjective practical initiative with the aim of transforming objective reality to some degree is condemned to failure as a matter of principle. This activity is thus confined to the limits of **subjective criticism**.

The limits of subjective criticism begin to be overcome with the introduction of dialectical thought, especially with Hegel, who attributes contradiction to the objective world as its main characteristic. Reality, then, is in permanent movement. Thus, the duty of consciousness is to apprehend the objective contradictions in order to know and understand the becoming of being. But since, in Hegel, the conscious subject is immersed in the dialectic of the objective movement, there is no subjective practical activity independent of that movement; reality is conceived as the objective movement of the Idea, and there is no room for any other practical possibility than that which points the way to that movement in the light

¹ HEGEL, G. W. F. *The Science of Logic*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 2010, p. 382.

of the solution of its internal contradictions; subjective activity is seen as a process of self-knowledge of the objective being; all subjective practice, including criticism, disappears in the avalanche of objective totality, in the march of the Absolute toward its self-consciousness.

The contradiction between Hegel's dialectical method and his philosophical system, which justified *in aeternum* the existence of the most oppressive institutions of the Prussian state, motivated the criticism of his successors—who did not refuse, however, to carry on within the parameters of Hegelian thought. The most fruitful criticism on this respect was the one carried out by the so-called *Young Hegelians* (or *Hegelian Left*), a movement led by Feuerbach which included a young Rhenish man named Karl Marx. Although there are different nuances among them in terms of the problems they address and, above all, in terms of what each of them highlights in their master's thought, the *Young Hegelian* movement is characterized by the fact that it rescues the autonomy of *subjective activity* from the Hegelian ocean of objective being in which it was submerged, because it recovers the activity of consciousness as a critical activity, and not only as a purely cognitive one. But, this time, it is not a matter of recovering *subjective criticism*; on the contrary, the position of consciousness is now that of criticism because it addresses being from the outside, it contemplates it as an external object, yet not as a contradiction, but as a contemplative subject; contradiction is likewise recognized, in the Hegelian way, as an attribute of the objective movement of reality. It is, in short, an **objective criticism**, where the subjective activity is the intellectual activity of apprehension of the objective contradiction and of vigilance (criticism) over the real materialization of what objective dialectics imposes as a necessity in its movement. The role of consciousness, then, consists of clarifying—by penetrating into the essence of its dialectical nature—each form and each phase of the real movement as necessary moments of the development of being, pursuing its practical realization against any opposition. Objective criticism watches over the unfolding of being in its becoming. In Feuerbach's words, *criticism was to restore truth to reality*.

This is the starting point of the young Marx's thinking. The *objective criticism* that he began to practice, between 1842 and 1843, as a literary activist from the pages of that "organ of democracy" which was the *Rheinische Zeitung*, is a *critical philosophy*. The *Young Hegelians*, at the beginning, conceived philosophy in Hegel's way, that is, with capital letters: Philosophy was the intellectual reflection of Being, or, in other words, the expression of Reason. Critical philosophy was, then, the rational criticism of the world, the scrutiny of reality under the parameters of Reason, the sentinel that supervised the embodiment of rationality in the world. The *Young Hegelian* movement was born precisely as a critical movement from the realization that some of the Hegelian earthly manifestations of Spirit or Reason were actually not very reasonable. Philosophical criticism gradually distanced this movement from Philosophy. The first to do so was Feuerbach, who, in his criticism of the Christian religion—the foundation of the Prussian state legitimized by Hegel—, had experienced a humanist turn in his thinking that led him to propose the reduction of Philosophy to an Anthropology. Marx, on the other hand, focused his attention more on the state and the issues surrounding it, proposing the reform of laws and political practices supposedly alien to Reason in his journalistic articles. Naturally, the young Marx's enterprise in the *Rheinische Zeitung* was a

complete failure. The Prussian state not only disregarded the advice of his critical philosophy, but also ordered the closure of the newspaper and the exile of its editor. The closure of the *Rheinische Zeitung* was, for Marx, the ideological failure of Philosophy as a criticism orienting practice, and, politically, since he had clearly manifested democratic-popular concerns in his articles (in which he had criticized attacks perpetrated against the popular sectors by the possessing classes), his break with the bourgeoisie.

During his exile in Paris, between 1843 and 1845, we find Marx integrating the influence of French materialist socialism, filtered through the humanist-universalist Feuerbachian sieve, into his traditional philosophical problematic. Marx discovers the proletariat and sees in it the instrument capable of embodying rationality in the world. In the novel organ of his newly embraced communism, the *German-French Annals*, he writes in early 1844:

“As philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *spiritual* weapons in philosophy. And once the lightning of thought has squarely struck this ingenuous soil of the people the emancipation of the *Germans* into *human beings* will take place.”²

But, although Marx declares his political affiliation as a communist, his thought is still bourgeois: ideologically, he has not yet broken with the bourgeoisie (and this bastard symbiosis can only produce a utopian-communist program). This evolution is manifested in the step Marx takes in his point of view from *objective criticism* to **political criticism** (or *philosophy of action*, which is nothing more than a development of critical philosophy). As his experience had shown, the appeals to Reason were not enough for a rational practice; the force of ideas was not enough by itself to order the world, so the conscious subject had to tread the terrain of politics to find the practical instruments that would allow the realization of that project. Marx believed he had found that instrument in the proletariat. But, here, the proletariat is only an intermediary: it is neither the conscious subject (a position that Marx still reserves for the intelligentsia) nor the object of transformation (which, for Marx, is humanity as a concept, abstract humanity), it is only the “weapon” of theory for consciousness to objectively shape the product of its subjective activity. Although Marx advances from the point of view of practice as a product of theory (objective criticism) to the awareness of the need for a union between theory and practice (political criticism), he still sees this union not as a *fusion*, but as an *alliance*: he still observes intellectual criticism and the material movement separately as an external unity, he still moves within the parameters of the influence exerted on him by Feuerbach, who had said that *philosophy is the head and the people are the heart*, that is, within the parameters of bourgeois thought. Marx’s break with bourgeois thought³ took place when

2 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction*; in MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. *Collected Works*. Progress Publishers. Moscow, 1975, Vol. 3, p. 187.

3 Although coming from different intellectual foundations (Enlightenment and liberalism) with respect to Marx (Hegelianism and democracy) and through a different experience (the disappointment that accompanied his collaboration with the *Doktorklub*, the Berlin group of Young Hegelians, during 1841 and 1842, as well as the contrast produced in him in the face of this disillusionment by his subsequent and shocking stay in England, whose socioeconomic reality was revealing for his spirit), Engels also

he finished outlining a conceptual revolution that shaped a new framework of thought, and, in fact, the inauguration of a new conception of the world. This new cosmological framework implies a new change in the position of consciousness in Marxian thought, a position that is the first differentiating characteristic of proletarian thought with respect to any of the forms of bourgeois thought. This evolution in Marx's thought is mainly of a material character; that is to say, it refers, above all, to the content of the fundamental theoretical-conceptual postulates that serve as the basis of consciousness. Naturally, the new theoretical corpus that Marx arranges does not arise overnight, but is the product of that philosophical evolution and of his practice of criticism, which—in the context of a permanent practice as an environment for the contrast of theoretical results—made such evolution possible, and by virtue of which he progressively distilled the new concepts and theoretical categories that, critically assembled, allowed at a given moment the qualitative leap necessary to configure a novel system of thought. Thus, from the criticism of Hegel's philosophy—mainly through the results of his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*—, to *The German Ideology*—that is, between 1843 and 1846—, including the assimilation of materialism by means of the study of French socialism and English political economy (the *Paris Manuscripts*, which are also a continuation of his criticism of Hegel) as well as the criticism of Feuerbach's naive materialism and abstract humanism (*Theses on Feuerbach*), Marx achieved the theoretical synthesis that would serve as the basis for the new world view.

There are three theoretical axes around which the new way of thinking was built. First, the concept of ***praxis***. This term was not coined by Marx, but posthumously by some scholars of his thought in order to describe the conception he came to elaborate on practice, or, more specifically, on the theory–practice relation. Unlike the term *practice*, which is defined **in opposition** to theory, *praxis* is practice **fused** with theory, as a unity of opposites where practice represents the principal aspect. As opposed to the pre-Marxist (bourgeois) forms of theory–practice relation—which we have briefly reviewed—, *praxis* expresses the superior form, because it represents that relation as a dialectical unity. The break with Feuerbach and the *Young Hegelian* movement (made public in 1845 with the work written in collaboration with Engels, *The Holy Family*), together with the contact with the industrialization and the combative proletariat that were developing in France and England, led Marx to abandon any hint of idealism and to consider **consciousness as a practical subjective activity**, which meant making a revolutionary philosophical turn consisting of **thinking of consciousness no longer as a product of theory, but as a reflection of practice**.

went through moralizing idealism and the philosophy of action, which he replaced after 1844 with a materialist-economist conception of society; his critical application with respect to capitalism (especially his article published in the *Annals* entitled *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*), although elements of historical materialism are still only scattered throughout his discourse, would be one of the stimuli that would inspire Marx to channel his critical humanist materialism towards the conceptual revolution of the new proletarian thought (To become familiar with Engels's particular intellectual journey, convergent with Marx's since 1844, see BERMUDO, J. M.: *Conocer Engels y su obra*. Dopesa. Barcelona, 1979. For the itinerary of the young Marx up to historical materialism it is essential to read, by the same author, *El concepto de praxis en el joven Marx*. Ed. Península. Barcelona, 1976. And for both, naturally, the classic by Auguste CORNU: *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels. Leur vie et leur œuvre*. Presses universitaires de France. Paris, 1955).

In a first moment of the process that leads Marx to the concept of *praxis*, practice acquires a new meaning and a greater weight in his thought, as an effect of the impression left on him by the verification of the material power of the economic sphere, concretized in his philosophy as *labor*. In the *Manuscripts* of 1844, labor is already considered as the fundamental link between man and nature and the basis of the former's social character, but a substantialist concept of man and an abstract estimation of that relation (idealism) still dominates.

"The *human* aspect of nature exists only for *social* man; for only then does nature exist for him as a *bond* with *man*—as his existence for the other and the other's existence for him—as the life-element of human reality. Only then does nature exist as the *foundation* of his own *human* existence. Only here has what is to him his *natural* existence become his *human* existence, and nature become man for him. Thus *society* is the complete unity of man with nature—the true resurrection of nature—the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature."⁴

On the other hand, *labor*, understood as an essential human activity, is also approached in an abstract manner and used as a central point to face a problem of a clearly Feuerbachian nature: the *alienated man*.

"This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces—labour's product—confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realisation of labour appears as *loss of realisation* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*."⁵

Marx contemplates capitalism as a society of alienated or "estranged" men because the empire of private property expropriates from the producers the fruit of their labor, in which the young Marx sees the social projection (objectification) of man—and, therefore, his true *humanization*—through his economic relation with nature. It is from this theoretical position that the utopian communist Marx of 1844 claims the abolition of private property as the means to overcome the slavery of alienated labor and to restore the *true* human nature of labor: *free labor*. But, from that claim, Marx is not yet defending a proletarian-class position, but a democratic, petty-bourgeois one. Indeed, *alienated man* is nothing more than the idealized transfiguration of the individual producer, and the problem of *alienated labor*, with its anti-capitalist criticism, is nothing more than the theoretical manifestation of the crisis of the mercantile economy in the face of the advance of capitalism; in the same way, the abstract, almost bucolic, relation between man and nature from which Marx starts to explain society is situated in the same line of thought as the liberal ideologists of the eighteenth

4 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; in MARX, ENGELS: C. W., Vol. 3, p. 298.

5 *Ibidem*, p. 272.

century; even the idea of the passage of humanity from a supposedly primitive state of nature to its social state (*truly* human) through labor, which serves as a backdrop to the Marxian arguments of the *Manuscripts*, is already found in Locke. There is no doubt that Marx studied the British authors, both economists and politicians, in his Parisian exile, and their influence was felt in the evolution of his thought; as there is no doubt, either, not only that Marx would abandon these theoretical and political positions by himself very soon, but that he would later on direct very harsh criticisms against those who defended them.

The step towards *praxis* is taken by Marx when he succeeds in bringing together and ordering the different elements resulting from his criticism in such a way that they express a new view of the world. In particular, Marx comes to conceive, **in a concrete way**, the relation of man with nature as something material, as the **production of his means of life**; likewise, he overcomes the abstract notion of *labor*, and understands that the reproduction of man's means of life can only be fully understood as **social production**; finally, he discards the universal man of rational nature and describes man as a set of **social relations**, precisely those that men generate when they organize themselves to produce their means of life. With this conceptual framework, Marx manages for the first time to formulate a consistent materialist conception of the world and of man, and therefore a scientific conception of social reality. The concept of *praxis* adequately summarizes the synthesis of this new body of doctrine because it expresses the place occupied by consciousness in the new scientific conception of the world, namely, as the **intellectual reflection of social relations**, as the subjective projection of the material activity of man socially organized to produce his means of life, or, alternatively, as the **subjective aspect of practice**. Finally, the dialectics of *praxis* asserts that the mode of consciousness only expresses the mode in which men produce their means of life, and that to each mode of production corresponds a state of consciousness; that is to say, consciousness is the expression of a practical subjective activity. This activity of the conscious subject, which in Hegel had a merely contemplative character and which was subjected to the objective movement of being, regains in Marx its subjective autonomy, no longer as a pure activity of criticism separated from objectivity, as in the *Young Hegelians*, but as a practical activity that becomes **one more attribute of the objective material movement of society**, that is to say, incorporating itself into this movement as the subjective part of its materiality, as a necessary subjective moment of the objective movement of society. Being (society) and consciousness, in short, form a material unity in correspondence with the way of life of men. From the concept of *praxis*, finally, from the idea of the material unity of being and consciousness, the Marxist **revolutionary conception of the world** emerges as its logical culmination:

"It has not, like the idealist view of history, to look for a category in every period, but remains constantly on the real *ground* of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice, and accordingly it comes to the conclusion that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism (...) but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave

rise to this idealistic humbug; that not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history, also of religion, of philosophy and all other kinds of theory.”⁶

Marx has thus broken with critical thought understood as an independent activity of consciousness, that is, with bourgeois thought. He has completed his political break with the **ideological break with the bourgeoisie**. Marx now treads the terrain of proletarian thought.

The second axis of the Marxist conception of the world is a derivation of the idea of *praxis*; or rather, it is the result of its theoretical application. Indeed, once the scientific materialist starting point has been defined, Marx explains the development of history from this new point of view. The result is **historical materialism**, or, if you will, the first exposition of dialectical materialism in the form of a brilliant synthesis of the development of human history. Historical materialism is, so to speak, the *unfolding of praxis*, the historical exposition of the **permanent transformation (revolutionization) of the world**—of man, nature and society—through productive activity.

From his materialist conception of history, Marx shows us the impossibility of imposing subjective desires on the march of events, which necessarily follow one another according to real material conditions. At the same time, he also shows us the impossibility of interposing reformist programs elaborated by critical consciousness on the laws of history; he shows us that there is no opposition between the *is* and the *ought* that would allow the substitution of the former for the latter, but that both are one and the same thing from the point of view of historical tendencies. The Feuerbachian chimera of the Marx of the *Manuscripts*, which sought to replace *alienated labor* with *free labor*, is therefore absurd and idealistic.

Historical materialism also shows that humanity does not exist as an abstract entity, but as a concrete, socially determined reality. And this determination is man as a *zoon politikon*, as a *political animal*, as a social entity. Man, then, is a product of his epoch and of the social relations that have generated his mode of producing his conditions of existence. Man, thus, only presents himself in history as slave, serf, lord, bourgeois or proletarian: in a real and concrete way, and never from a supposed and abstract pure essential humanity. Marx shows us, in this way, the correct way to adequately pose the **problem of human emancipation**, which is the basic problem that **motivates the evolution of his thought**. Marx carries out a conceptual rupture with his philosophical past and, we could say, with all philosophy before him; a conceptual rupture that leads him to the formulation of a new conception of the world, a conception that is, moreover, a militant one, that has a clear partisan vocation and openly declares itself classist; but all this is nothing more than **the way Marx solves** questions of universal depth, precisely **the great questions that all previous philosophy had raised** and that only with him find an answer. Marxian thought is, in its origins, universalist, rationalist, and humanist, for it sinks its roots in the most solid strata of Western thought, from Greek classicism to Renaissance humanism, the French Enlightenment and the German idealist school. All the currents of thought that place man at the center of their reflections, that try to explain his position in the world and to discern the way to behave

⁶ *The German Ideology*; in MARX, ENGELS: C. W., Vol. 5, pp. 53–54.

rationality in it, have in Marx their last great exponent; and all the problems that those schools have raised as essential find in Marx their guiding star. And it is the search for answers to the great questions posed by humanity what leads Marx to the new conception of the world. Marx never breaks with the basic problems that led him to philosophical and political activity, although he is forced, in order to solve them, to make an epistemological leap, in theory, and a change in his class position, in politics. But the reason for these transformations will never be to change, for example, the problem of the emancipation of humanity for that of the emancipation of the working class (which would mean falling into a form of *workerism*, a very common error in the history of the international communist movement). On the contrary, the great teaching to which historical materialism leads us consists precisely in the fact that the **necessary** movement of history leaves open the **possibility**, at a given moment, of realistically posing the problem of the emancipation of humanity in such a way that it can be solved from social and material premises that allow that emancipation to be something more than an idealistic chimera, provided that the laws of social development themselves are taken into consideration, that is, provided that these are not substituted by vain critical-utopian projects with scientific pretensions. But let us not anticipate events and let us recapitulate.

We have consciousness conceived as an attribute of matter, in dialectical unity with real practice, as a necessary moment of the social movement (*praxis*); and we also have the application of this point of view to the whole history of humanity (historical materialism). But this *unfolding of praxis* entails a *withdrawal* of consciousness, in the sense that it undergoes a kind of *splitting* that, in short, will entail a retreat towards positions of criticism, a certain rupture in the unity with social practice achieved by consciousness. And we speak of *splitting* because this rupture has two aspects: in the first place, *consciousness of self*, that is, the ideological representation that each of the social forms that shape historical development has of itself. Marx points out that, in every society, "*the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.*"⁷ *Consciousness of self*, therefore, is *false consciousness*. It is *false* because it does not reflect the totality of social practice, the totality of the process of social production and of the totality of social relations, but only that part of them that allows their reproduction in terms of conservation, hiding precisely those forms and tendencies that would allow the revolutionization of that mode of social production and that are revealed through the class struggle. But along with *false consciousness* (or *consciousness of self*), historical materialism also offers its criticism, the criticism of *false consciousness*. As opposed to what different societies think of themselves as a spontaneous reflection of their social practice, historical materialism also offers the scientific understanding of their objective development and, therefore, the possibility of knowing the tendencies of their evolution and subsequent transformation into new social formations. However, **this implies the return of consciousness to the position of objective criticism**, and, consequently, once again, the split between theory (critical consciousness) and practice (social process capable of reflecting only a spontaneous consciousness). Incidentally, this is the position adopted by historians, sociologists, economists and other scholars of social forms—or of some of their spheres—, past and present: Marxism **only as a critical method** of scientific research of society, the Marxist

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

method configured only as an epistemological instrument for the contemplative criticism of social being; that is, to the extent that the internal unity of the concept of praxis (theory–practice fusion) is again presented as separated in its elements, a gnoseological practice governed by a bourgeois canon.

But the most important characteristic of the social process consists in the fact that, at a certain historical moment, in its development, *consciousness of self*, which the social being obtains, comes to coincide with *critical consciousness*, which analyzes the tendencies and objective possibilities of its development and its revolutionary transformation. This moment is that of the appearance of the proletariat in history. The proletariat is the historically determined social class that can represent to itself, thanks to the critical-objective consciousness, an idea of its social position and of its historical role as a revolutionary subject (*consciousness of self*) that is no longer a *false consciousness*, but the subjective reflection in accordance with the objective direction of the social process. When *consciousness of self* coincides with objective consciousness, or, in other words, when objective criticism succeeds in transforming the false consciousness of the proletariat (since false consciousness also exists in the form of economism, trade unionism, workerism and ideological spontaneism in general), proletarian consciousness becomes revolutionary, it is *consciousness*—in Marx's words—*for itself*. In this way, the proletariat can develop its subjective social practice in the same direction as the tendency of the objective social process. It is, then, at this moment that consciousness rescues its unity with social matter **in the form of the revolutionary proletariat**. The revolutionary proletariat is the return of Marxist theory–practice fusion (*praxis*) recovered at a higher level **as revolutionary praxis**. At this point, the third pillar of Marxian thought begins to take shape; a pillar or axis that refers to one of the culminating moments of the development of Marxism as a conception of the world: the moment of the **self-consciousness of the social being**.

Self-consciousness presupposes the identification of the social process with the revolutionary subject. The process of capitalist accumulation creates the conditions for this identification by destroying the bases of individual production, by socializing the productive forces and all spheres of social relations (to the point that, with corporations, even private property becomes *social*, in the sense that the mechanisms of individual appropriation of the social product are gradually dissolved), and by proletarianizing the great majority of humanity, that is to say, by radically confronting dispossessed and exploited humanity, at one pole, with capital, which concentrates and holds the totality of the means of production, at the other. Marx demonstrates that the present social polarization between haves and have-nots is a historical product, the result of the gradual process of expropriation of humanity of its means and conditions of existence in the course of the history of the social division of labor, of the emergence and development of classes and of the struggle between them. In this way, self-consciousness can be defined as the subjective aspect of social practice when the subject occupies the social position objectively suitable for revolutionary practice, when this practice entails a universal emancipatory practice. In other words, when the appropriation of its conditions of existence as an oppressed class and as a revolutionary class entails the abolition of class-organized society itself, and therefore the emancipation of all humanity from the

scourges of class society. In this process, the proletariat is, at the same time, subject and object of social transformation: subject, because it gradually acquires the degree of *consciousness for itself*; object, because the movement governed and directed by self-consciousness (*consciousness for itself*) is a movement of transformation of said proletariat as a class that represents the social totality (humanity historically and socially determined as working class) and whose terrain of development is class struggle (the only context that can procure the conscious elevation of the proletariat to its self-consciousness); a **movement of self-transformation of the proletariat from exploited class into emancipated humanity**. The social process is then presented as universal progress where the fusion between theory and practice is concretized as *revolutionary praxis* of the proletariat in a process of **self-emancipation**, in which the conscious subject can no longer refer to the objective activity of criticism, separated from practical activity, but to **conscious practical activity** itself as the main attribute of the revolutionary process of self-transformation of the proletariat. In this way, Marx definitively overcomes the old youthful idea of the conscious subject understood as intellectual individuality—and which still found a certain margin of legitimacy in the meaning of his thought as historical materialism, as the materialist method of history—allied to but separated from the practical social movement. Marx strips the bourgeois intellectual of his mantle as the flamboyant depository of conscious subjective activity and fuses this attribute within a social entity, the proletariat, with its practical movement, turning it into a revolutionary movement. The proletariat thus becomes a conscious social formation, a collective intellectual; it is a conscious subject at the same time as the very matter of the social movement. Thus, the proletariat, conscious of its position within capitalist society and of its historical role (*self-consciousness*), can initiate the revolutionary process necessary to fulfill that role, a process that is nothing more than its own transformation from a subjugated class into liberated humanity (Communism) through its class struggle (*self-transformation*). The oppressed class, at last and for the first time in history, ceases to need saviors or guardians to see to its liberation: the proletariat can now emancipate itself (*self-emancipation*). Thus, the third great axis of Marxist thought, the notion of *revolutionary praxis*, is completely outlined.

The intellectual journey of the proletarian Marx begins, then, with the conceptual construction around the idea of *praxis* and culminates with the thesis of *revolutionary praxis*. The first establishes the revolutionary conception of the world on a general, philosophical or even scientific plane; the second brings it to the factual plane, to politics. Finally, all this theoretical development is summed up in an assertion, a kind of mandate that we could designate as the Marxist *categorical imperative*:

“The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”⁸

The XI Thesis on Feuerbach brilliantly synthesizes the revolutionary conception of the world that is Marxism. However, the way in which its formulation is presented also expresses the contradiction and the limits of Marx’s work. Indeed, the vocative way in which this thesis is formulated already indicates in itself a **real asynchronism** between theory and practice.

⁸ *Theses on Feuerbach*; in MARX, ENGELS: C. W., Vol. 5, p. 5.

Likewise, the content of the thesis also shows a separation between the moment of understanding the **necessity** of the transformation of the world and the moment of the **act** of said transformation. This does not fit with the Marxian notion of *revolutionary praxis*, for which the theoretical moment is not separated from the moment of practice. All this indicates that, **factually**, in proletarian thought, as elaborated by Marx (with the collaboration of Engels), consciousness has undergone a transformation in terms of its **contents**, as a conception of the world, but at the same time there has not been a shift in its **position** in relation to practice; or, rather, there has indeed been a shift towards practice, but **only in the sphere of theory**, not in living and real practice, in material practice. This mismatch between the position that consciousness attains **in theory** (unity with practice as *revolutionary praxis*) and its real relation **in practice** (the consciousness that understands that it must merge with the real practical movement, but has not yet consummated this step) is what explains the need, on Marx's part, for a categorical formulation—almost like an ethical imperative—as a call to practical action. In a way, **in terms of its form**, Marx cannot fully elaborate the point of view of the proletariat except under the discursive tools of yet another type of *philosophy of action*. And in this consists the main contradiction of Marxian thought: a revolutionary and proletarian, classist conceptual corpus within a bourgeois envelope. The call to revolutionize the world without being able to do so means that proletarian thought, to the extent that Marx and Engels developed it, still keeps one foot on the **political** terrain of the bourgeoisie and on the terrain of **the forms** of bourgeois thought. This is its limit as a practical instrument for the proletariat and its class struggle. In the end, this limit is nothing more than the result—logical and understandable for any materialist—of constructing a revolutionary new conception of the world and a new way of thinking in the only way that is possible: with the old inherited theoretical and conceptual materials and on the basis of the previous intellectual universe. Throughout his career, Marx came to understand and embrace that “the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism by weapons.”⁹ In fact, he had passed, in his experience, from the first principle (*criticism as a weapon*) to the second (*weapons as criticism*, that is, the **imperative** of revolution), and this is certainly the meaning of the last thesis on Feuerbach: the *criticism of weapons* as an expression for **revolutionary criticism**. Revolutionary *criticism*, but **not yet revolutionary practice**. Marx does not manage to take the last step from the *criticism by weapons* to the *taking up of weapons*; he leaves revolution posed as a theoretical necessity, as subjective consciousness, **as a political program**, but **not as a real political movement**.

The limit encountered by Marx's thought implies the non-realization of *revolutionary praxis* in practice, leaving it relegated to mere theoretical formulation. The consequence is a new theoretical-conceptual retreat of consciousness to the positions of *revolutionary criticism*. *Revolutionary praxis* demands a material concretion, to incarnate itself as a practical political movement, because it is revolution *in actu*. If this does not happen, the realization of that *praxis* as a material fusion between theory and social practice will not take place, and the notions of *praxis* and revolution will only be forms of thought or states of theoretical consciousness. **Revolutionary praxis is the revolutionary proletariat** (i.e., the proletariat developing its revolutionary class struggle), and in Marx's time various historical and political

⁹ *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction*, p. 182.

circumstances, objective and subjective, contributed to the detriment of its realization, particularly—considering the experience of the Paris Commune—of its **systematic realization** (i.e., planned and conscious, and not sporadic and spontaneous, like the *communard* episode); although Marx and Engels did strive to find channels for its material realization, as shown by their activities in the Communist League and the IWA and their close relation with the European workers' movement, in general, and with the German socialist movement, in particular. But this failure meant the banishment of *revolutionary praxis* from the territories of material activity and its relegation to the sphere of theoretical consciousness as *revolutionary criticism*, which, for its part, as an exponent of the material non-realization of the theoretical-praxeological fusion within the proletariat that is *revolutionary praxis*, reveals a mode of **external** relation between theory and practice, and therefore a criticist, bourgeois mode of the state of consciousness. As *revolutionary criticism*, consciousness adopts a gnoseological position of a bourgeois type, because it is one more form of *objective criticism*; but it is also its highest form.

Revolutionary criticism is the objective criticism that observes reality from the perspective of having embraced the revolutionary (proletarian) conception of the world. Therefore, it recognizes the necessity of the laws of historical development and of the social relations that this development has eventually reached, **but it also** establishes the need to transform them, revolutionizing them. This is the position of *revolutionary criticism*. Unlike the critical-objective position represented by historical materialism, a position of consciousness that still allowed the bourgeois academic exercise of interpreting history as just another *social science*, the critical-objective position expressed as *revolutionary criticism* completely excludes this possibility and any other one that intends to break the existing unity between the social process and the social revolution, that wants to dissociate the historical development as a stage for the class struggle from its solution in Communism, that seeks to break the links between the past and the future of humanity. *Revolutionary criticism* is the critical position of consciousness when it recognizes and has completely assimilated the necessity of *revolutionary praxis* as a theoretical moment for its subjective intellectual activity; contrary to historical materialism, which is an *earlier* theoretical moment in the Marxist cosmological construction, and whose critical activity does not, therefore, have to be related to the revolutionary activity of transforming the object of its criticism. In concrete terms, *revolutionary criticism* is the theoretical activity of the conscious subject that systematically demonstrates, by all means and from all perspectives, the need for revolution as a solution to social contradictions, the need for the objective social process to lead to *revolutionary praxis* as its only true solution. *Revolutionary criticism* relies, for this purpose, on the scientific and theoretical-conceptual wealth of Marxism—including historical materialism—, but providing it, in this case, with the directional sense—towards the proletarian revolution and Communism—that derives from the fundamental content of Marxism as the proletariat's worldview: a content that is essentially revolutionary. For this reason, the purpose of *revolutionary criticism* is practical activity, not pure theoretical knowledge, which is only a *means* to that end. *Revolutionary criticism* thus expresses a position of consciousness as a subjective activity directed towards practice, and not as an intellectual theoretical activity. For this reason, it is

also the product of this conscious activity that alone can be configured as what Lenin called **vanguard theory**. Only a theoretical conception of the world organized and developed to lay the ideological foundations for the transformation of said world can be placed at the head of that transformation; only when consciousness has reached and adopted the gnoseological position of *revolutionary criticism* can it be placed in readiness to merge with the social process and form a whole in a permanent **mutual transformation** of the world and of ideas until Communism is reached (*revolutionary praxis*). In fact, the most important and most valuable part of the legacy of Marx and Engels is precisely the body of theoretical works which, gathered together, constitute what we could designate as their *critical-revolutionary doctrine*, that monumental intellectual effort to demonstrate the theoretical and practical necessity of revolution from various angles, all that they could encompass: economics, with their magnum opus, *Das Kapital*; politics and history: edition of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France*, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and a long etcetera; and even science, with the *Anti-Dühring* and their interest in linking the results of the sciences with the materialist conception of history (*Dialectics of Nature*).

Like any material reality, Marxism develops through its internal contradictions. And the underlying, fundamental contradiction between the Marxist categorical imperative and its revolutionary conception of the world, that contradiction which still appears in Marx's thought as a peculiar expression of the old opposition between the *is* (social movement) and the *ought* (social revolution)—a duality which, certainly, bears witness to the fact that bourgeois thought and practice have not yet been completely surpassed—, would not be overcome until Lenin and the Bolsheviks outlined and gave real content to the contours of the **proletarian party of a new type**.

Marx had identified *revolutionary praxis* with the revolutionary proletariat, but in the abstract, understanding the movement of emancipation of the class as a political movement in general, without yet being able to define or describe its modes or the course of its development, precisely because that movement had not yet matured sufficiently due to those objective and subjective circumstances proper to its epoch—an epoch that we could define as one of transition, with a bourgeoisie that saw its revolutionary energies exhausting and a young proletariat that was not yet in a position to take the historical torch of the social revolution. Lenin's epoch, on the other hand, is that of the entry of capitalism into its imperialist phase and the maturation of the conditions for the organization of the proletariat as a revolutionary class. Lenin's epoch is that of the first large-scale attacks of the proletariat against capital (victories on the electoral front in Germany, the First Russian Revolution of 1905...), it is the epoch of the birth of the proletarian movement as a revolutionary movement. Lenin can observe the revolutionary proletariat in a concrete way: he has the possibility of studying in a specific and objective way the forms that this movement acquires in reality. The result is the development of the Marxist notion of *revolutionary praxis* in terms of its contents. If Marx conferred on it the general meaning of *revolutionary proletariat*, Lenin manages to concretize it to the point of identifying it with the concept of a *proletarian party of a new type* or Communist Party. Or, if you prefer, to put it another way: Lenin identifies the concepts of

revolutionary proletariat and *Communist Party*. Marx does not reach this point: he does not achieve it in the *Manifesto*—although he already brilliantly intuits the vanguard character of the communists within the workers' movement—because he lacked the later experience of the international proletariat on which Lenin based himself, mainly the understanding of the internal mechanism that governs the political development of the class—its particular dialectics—through the vanguard–masses contradiction, and, on the other hand, the historical and fundamental split that took place between the revolutionary line and the opportunist line within the international workers' movement. It was the study and synthesis of the new and transcendental episodes of the history of the proletariat that made it possible for Lenin to confer a real and concrete content to the notion of *revolutionary praxis*.

The Marxist concept of *revolutionary praxis* as a fusion of theory and practice finds its materialization in the Leninist project of the proletarian party as a product of the fusion between Marxist revolutionary theory (*revolutionary criticism*) and the workers' movement. This is the formulation used by Lenin to delimit the conditions of Marxist unity between theory and practice in reality. And this conception is, moreover, a constant in his political career. As early as 1899, Lenin already made clear what constituted for him the essence of the proletarian party:

“The separation of the working-class movement and socialism gave rise to weakness and underdevelopment in each: the theories of the socialists, unfused with the workers' struggle, remained nothing more than utopias, good wishes that had no effect on real life; the working-class movement remained petty, fragmented, and did not acquire political significance, was not enlightened by the advanced science of its time. For this reason, we see in all European countries a constantly growing urge to *fuse* socialism with the working-class movement in a single *Social-Democratic* movement. When this fusion takes place the class struggle of the workers becomes *the conscious struggle of the proletariat* to emancipate itself from exploitation by the propertied classes, it is evolved into a higher form of the socialist workers' movement—the *independent working-class Social-Democratic party*.¹⁰

At the very beginning of his career, then, Lenin had already ordered the elements that configure the Marxist *revolutionary praxis* and which would allow its practical material realization. Leninism can build the political edifice of *revolutionary praxis*—the party of a new type—thanks to the favorable objective conditions cultivated by imperialism, but, above all and from the subjective point of view, thanks to the theoretical basis bequeathed by Marx and Engels, so that the Leninist theory of the relation between consciousness and social movement can already tread with both feet on proletarian ground: not only with regard to the content of that relation, but also with regard to **the form** that reflects the proletarian ideological conception of the world. With Lenin and the Leninist party, not only the revolutionary thought already corresponds to the proletarian conception of the world, but

10 *A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy*; in LENIN, V.I. *Collected Works*. Progress Publishers. Moscow, 1960, Vol. 4, p. 257.

also so does the language in which this thought is spoken and expressed. And this *language* is precisely the *communist* (rather than “Social-Democratic”) *movement*, i.e. the “higher form of the (...) workers’ movement”; in other words, the Communist Party.¹¹

Twenty-one years later, in full intellectual maturity and with a long experience behind him, enough to have contrasted the criteria of his younger self with reality, Lenin restated (although in a collateral way, in the middle of the debate against leftism in the Komintern) what for him is the essence of the Party:

“When the *revolutionary party of the proletariat*, the *highest* form of proletarian class organisation, began to take shape (and the Party will not merit the name until it learns to weld the leaders into one indivisible whole with the class and the masses) the trade unions inevitably began to reveal *certain* reactionary features (...)”¹²

11 “Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.” *The German Ideology*, p. 49. It is important to note that Marxism has always considered communism not as an ideal of the future or, *in abstracto*, as the society of tomorrow, but as a real and immediate movement, as a practical social movement, in the first place, as the revolutionary political movement of the proletariat. This movement expresses a unity of means (the communist movement, the Communist Party) and ends (communist society) that determines that communism is a work in permanent construction, from its beginning as a material movement in which consciousness and society are mutually transformed (*revolutionary praxis*). This is the first sign of identity that separates Marxism from any utopian whim, previous to even its scientific pretensions. We can confirm, then, that already in the early Marxism there was the idea that identified the communist party with a social movement of revolutionary character. The later predominance of the organicist view of communism, of the revolutionary party exclusively as a narrow political organization, distinct from the movement and apart from it, has its origins—as well as in some plausible interpretations of passages of Marx himself, e.g., in the *Manifesto*—in the prototype of workers’ organization standardized by the Second International, and, above all, in the desire on the part of the Komintern to assure the independence of the political work of the proletarian vanguard, as opposed to the spontaneous movement of the masses and the reformist parties. The need to put all the weight on the vanguard and its organization was the natural reaction to the predominance of the mass party that had prevailed in the previous period. However, this tendency allowed the other extreme dogmatic view to take hold in the conception of the revolutionary party of the proletariat within the III International. For a correct reconstitution of the Marxist–Leninist meaning of the party, it is necessary to *negate again* the antithesis, characteristic of the October Cycle, that meant a shift from the party as the organization of the masses to the party as the organization of the vanguard, in order to find a synthesis—*negation of the negation*—that allows us to build the true proletarian party of a new type: the organization of the revolutionary movement of the masses.

12 “*Left-Wing*” *Communism—An Infantile Disorder*; in LENIN: C. W., Vol. 31, p. 50. By the way: let us point out here the other idea that Lenin invites us to deduce in this quotation, namely, that “the highest form of proletarian class organisation” is not the result of an “ideal” or of an organizational model invented *a priori*, but the necessary product of the very development of the proletarian class struggle, of the political split with the old forms of “class organisation” of the proletariat, namely the trade union and the old workers’ party, which, in the epoch of the monopolist organization of capital, are becoming, wholeheartedly and hand in hand with the labor aristocracy, part of the reaction.

The “indivisible” union of the vanguard with the masses, their *fusion*, is and has always been the determining idea of the Leninist type party; and the consecration, by virtue of that union, of “one indivisible whole”, of a **new social totality** in which **the proletarian mode** of revolutionary transformation of the world takes shape. The fusion of theory and practice, of vanguard and movement, of consciousness and social being is the revolutionary proletariat, the proletariat organized in **its** superior form of movement, which then emerges **as the superior form of the social movement**, and, in turn, as the **organic social totality** in process of transformation, as the movement of society in process of self-transformation. In this way, consciousness adopts, at last, the true proletarian position, that of the subject of revolutionary transformation of the world, when that subject is the very object of its transformation. The *consciousness for itself* of the proletariat is then the internal consciousness of the social movement: it is the premise and result of the transformation of the world and permanent ideological revolutionization through the world in permanent revolution. This is how the Leninist Communist Party expresses the historically superior mode of the state of consciousness, a state that corresponds, naturally, with the superior form of the social movement also on a historical scale.

The *Thesis of Reconstitution of the Communist Party* is based on this view concerning the relation between being and consciousness and on the need for the latter to adopt a certain position with respect to the former, a position that is also a historical product. This is, moreover, the ultimate reason why this political thesis is opposed to all those theories about the Communist Party that presuppose a pre-Marxist, bourgeois position of consciousness, a conception that dominates in the majority of communist groups, which generally understand the Party only as vanguard, as consciousness **external** to the social movement.

The *Thesis of Reconstitution* is also sustained on the Leninist idea that there is no revolutionary proletariat—and, therefore, revolutionary movement—outside the Communist Party; this implies a qualitative difference, from the point of view of proletarian politics, between the stage of Reconstitution of that party and the other stages in which it acts politically. From this, it follows then that there are two modes of state of revolutionary or communist consciousness: one before and one after the Reconstitution of the Communist Party. The above analysis of the evolution of Marxist–Leninist thought indicates, moreover, that these different states of consciousness correspond to two different positions of consciousness in relation to practice. Thus, revolutionary consciousness can only act as *revolutionary criticism* as long as the Communist Party does not exist, and only as *revolutionary praxis* as long as the Communist Party exists. Finally, according to the characteristics of these different positions of consciousness—which we have already studied—and considering that the political stage of the Reconstitution of the Communist Party is an integral part of its construction process, a process that is parallel to that of the Revolution, we can conclude that, **from the historical point of view, we are currently in the bourgeois phase of construction of the Communist Party** (the phase that corresponds, in general, with the **preparation of the Revolution**—meaning, with the *preparation* of the Party of the Revolution, with the Reconstitution phase).

Two phases and two forms of world transformation

We should not be disturbed by these considerations about the character of the historical moment in which we find ourselves; instead, we must be aware of it. The analysis of the evolution of Marxist thought has shown us that its origin is equally bourgeois. Therefore, it should not frighten us to discuss about the *bourgeois* origin of the political instruments of the proletariat, including its revolutionary party. With this, we will not only keep ourselves firmly positioned in the correct materialist point of view, moving away from the *workerist purism* so common in the past and in the present of the vanguard organizations, but we will also raise the idea of the proletarian party above the vulgar objective of both the electoralist or conspiratorial party, so common in our historical tradition, and the one resulting from the mere *communist unification*, so common today. Because these are indeed bourgeois parties to the fullest extent. Parties willfully made *once and for all*, whose plan of constitution does not include the evaluation of the state of consciousness of the revolutionary proletariat (that is, whether said state corresponds to that of the bourgeois or the proletarian conception of the world), because that plan was elaborated independently of the state of the movement of that revolutionary proletariat, that is, independently of the Leninist view of a proletarian party of a new type.

The fact that the materialist point of view on the bourgeois origin of the political instruments of the proletariat was not clearly made explicit during the First Revolutionary Cycle was due to its own characteristics. Above all because, on the one hand, the majority of the communist parties were born when the revolutionary process was on the offensive on the international plane, simplifying or simply skipping the long stage of political constitution understood as a prolonged period of accumulation of forces of the revolutionary proletariat; on the other hand, in the Bolshevik experience, in the first place, the emphasis was always placed more on the contradiction with Menshevism and on the qualitative leap that the Leninist party represented with respect to the social democratic tradition (*mass party*) represented by the Mensheviks, hardly paying attention to the other important aspect: the original link in the development and transformation of social democracy into Bolshevism. Secondly, it should be noted that the party of a new type did not emerge from the beginning as an independent plan of political construction separated from the model of the classic workers' party of the Second International: the differentiating elements were gradually incorporated until the necessary split between the two models. This meant that, henceforth, the correct Leninist thesis of the necessary political constitution of the revolutionary proletariat independently of the bourgeois workers' party was accompanied by the incorrect perception that any link—even if only of an original nature—of that which is proletarian with that which is bourgeois is negative or inappropriate. But it is one thing to intend to develop the revolutionary workers' party from the bourgeois workers' party, which is erroneous, and quite another to intend to build the revolutionary party from previous, fully configured proletarian foundations, which is an idealistic absurdity.¹³ Historically, as we have already

¹³ At this point, it is necessary to warn against the common mistake of intending to build the Party from the working-class bases, directly from the empirically taken proletarian class, as a method that

pointed out, it is with Lenin that the proletariat can conduct a policy befitting its class nature in terms of form and content; but this would have been impossible without the previous work of clearing that path carried out by Marx and Engels, without the premises that both managed to establish mainly on the theoretical and intellectual plane. Politically, on the other hand, any process of proletarian construction from scratch, wherever and whenever it takes place, must be based, at least in its preliminary stages, on pre-existing elements, that is, old, bourgeois, in short. It is their correct organization and their proper regrouping in the disposition of the fulfillment of the tasks of communism what will allow them to serve as the basis for creating something new and higher, so that their development creates the conditions for the revolutionary movement to generate new proletarian-class bases upon which to reproduce its future progress. At present and under the dominant political conditions, any pretension to build communism from supposedly pre-established proletarian premises is a mere fallacy. However, during the October Cycle, although it went unnoticed with regards to the matter of the construction of the Party, there was an opportunity to recognize the genetic problem of the bourgeois origin of proletarian elements when the imperatives of the march of the Soviet revolution put the question of the state as the political instrument of the proletariat on the agenda. And, here, Lenin's categorical conclusion was clear: *the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a bourgeois state without bourgeoisie*. Indeed, when the proletarian vanguard faced the analysis of the new phase of the revolution in conditions of political independence—which it could not enjoy **in the whole** period of the stage of constitution of the Party—, equipped with the materialist and dialectical conception of the world, it managed to discover the necessarily bourgeois origin of the proletariat-dominated state.

But, returning to the stage that concerns us, the stage of Reconstitution of the Communist Party, what are those basic elements of an old origin upon which we must build the new? They are none other than those that make up the Plan of Reconstitution. It is now, after several years of experience and of weighing in the light of practice the importance and dimension of each one of the different political tasks that make up our Plan since the end of 1993, when we finish organizing and ordering them hierarchically, so that their successive fulfillment will provide us with the ideological, political and organizational bases required to make the qualitative leap towards what is new, towards what does not yet exist even in its primary guidelines (the Communist Party). These political tasks are the basic elements that bourgeois society offers us and which we take as the first building materials of the new political edifice of the proletariat. We must not, therefore, lose perspective, nor mistake the ground on which we now tread; we must be able to recognize that the means and instruments now at our disposal are essentially bourgeois in character; that both *Bildung*, or the idea of the *workers' university* or the construction of individual cadres, as well as training in science and research or the activity of ideological and political propaganda, such as we exercise them today, etc., are, by their form and by their content—but above all by their form guarantees "previous, fully configured proletarian foundations." This is the typical fallacy of vulgar materialism. And not only because they ignore, with this approach, the problem of the character of the consciousness of these workers' bases, but, above all, because they forget that the Communist Party is not a positive construction, but a *social relation*, a certain relation between consciousness and the workers' movement.

—modes and procedures which are situated within the bourgeois framework of activity, insofar as all of them place us in an attitude of contemplation and critical interpretation of the world, which, however *revolutionary* they may appear to us, do not permit its material transformation. These modes and procedures are necessary as prerequisites for this transformation, but insufficient in themselves from the point of view of the strictly proletarian activity. The fact that all the political activity of the vanguard during the stage of Reconstitution and the whole Plan of Reconstitution revolve around *revolutionary criticism*, and that both elements can be conceptually summarized into said *revolutionary criticism* as the best definition of its most essential basis, besides constituting the axis of its development in its different phases (adopting, therefore, different forms or modes according to each phase or each moment), is the most eloquent indicator of the character of the political stage in which we find ourselves; especially, if we bear in mind the role that *revolutionary criticism* plays in the development of Marxism and we allow ourselves to establish a parallel with the development of the construction of the Party: if *revolutionary criticism* (semi-bourgeois activity) is not yet *revolutionary praxis* (fully proletarian activity), the character of the tasks of the Reconstitution cannot be that of those of the Revolution (although, *historically*, we may acknowledge that the Reconstitution is already the first stage of the Revolution; but it is not so **politically**).

Our Plan aims to develop the Principles of communism up to the Program of the communist revolution, or, which is the same, it pursues the conquest of the vanguard for communism. Now, this is nothing more than the conquest of the different sectors of that vanguard—first, of the most conscious and more theoretically and intellectually prepared, and, afterwards, of the practical leaders—**through *revolutionary criticism***, through the demonstrated **necessity** of the Proletarian Revolution, and not yet through the **actuality** of the revolution, as would be established by a political context of development of the *revolutionary praxis*. In short, these are **political instruments that allow and at the same time limit our activity to within the vanguard: they do not yet allow our activity within the mass movement**. The latter is only possible as a reconstituted Communist Party. One of the great ills of the communist movement in the last decades is that it has not understood the qualitative difference between the political means and instruments possible in the pre-party stage and the means and instruments necessary in a Communist Party. Because of this, the mistake of believing to have a reconstituted Party has been made on several occasions, when, in reality, it has only been possible to provide the vanguard, at most, with the political elements available in its bourgeois phase of construction, those that only allow to initiate its Reconstitution. The logical consequence is that by addressing the proletariat presenting themselves as the proletarian party of a new type, said attempts have only really presented themselves as a **bourgeois** party of a *new type*. The results have been obvious (bourgeois political line) and their failure, natural.

The character of the political instruments that the proletarian vanguard can equip itself with in the phase of Reconstitution of the Communist Party indicates, naturally, the **ground** on which those means allow to develop the revolutionary activity. We have already pointed out that said ground is limited to the scope of the vanguard; but what is the basic reason why the character of the present phase of the process of construction of the Party imposes a limit

on the activity of the vanguard? The reason lies precisely in the possibilities of that activity as a revolutionary activity.

Indeed, the realm of *revolutionary criticism*, the pillar of party construction in the stage of Reconstitution, is the realm of *objective criticism*, of rational criticism. This means that its object can only be consciousness, and, from the point of view of the material medium, its scale can only be individual. In other words, in the stage of Reconstitution, due to the character of the instruments and methods available, there are only conditions for **revolutionizing consciousness**. Of course, it is a mode of *revolution*, but a primitive one; in fact, it is the revolutionary model tolerated by the bourgeoisie: change consciousnesses first in order to change the world. It is the program of bourgeois reformism with which Marx polemicized in his Third Thesis on Feuerbach.¹⁴ But it is completely impossible to transform the consciousness of **all** the masses through criticism. Criticism, *revolutionary criticism*, represents for Marxism the primitive, preproletarian, *bourgeois* form of revolutionization of the world; a revolution that consists in the **immediate** transformation of consciousness on an individual scale by means of this criticism. For this reason, the scope of this activity cannot exceed the **individual scale** (persons or groups), and for this reason **it is the main method when the objective of communism is the vanguard of the proletariat**. But Marxism teaches us that:

“Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a *revolution*.”¹⁵

Then, to change minds on a large scale, the material bases that mold them must first be changed. This is the program of the revolutionary proletariat. The aim of this program also consists in transforming consciousness, but in the only way possible: in a **mediate** way, through the prior transformation of the material relations prevailing in society. The scope of activity, therefore, demands a process on a **social scale**. Here, criticism is no longer sufficient: **politics** is required as the axis of revolutionary activity. In the same way, it is no longer a question of the individual or the small individualized group, nor of their theoretical conception of things: **the masses** and their practical movement within the domain of the class struggle in all its facets **then become the objective**. And it is obvious that this revolutionary politics can only be applied by the revolutionary party of the only truly revolutionary class: the Leninist party of a new type.

The instrument of criticism is **rational dialectics**, and its basis is individual experience, which is a compendium of theoretical and practical knowledge. Rational dialectics pursues the approach of consciousness towards the revolutionary conception of the world by means of

14 “The [bourgeois] materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. (...) The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.” *Theses on Feuerbach*, p. 4.

15 *The German Ideology*, pp. 52–53.

persuasion, debate, **theoretical contrast** of practical experience, etc. It is, therefore, a limited context, which, from the point of view of the development of communism and the communist movement, can only be placed—in terms of its objectives and its means—within the historical period of conquest of the vanguard for the positions of the Proletarian Revolution. Historically, it corresponds to the properly bourgeois mode of political activity, a mode that takes us back—if we were to draw a parallel—to the time of the debating clubs and the café gatherings of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. This image can be distorting, because it does not allow to contemplate in all its importance the practical aspect that always accompanies the theoretical confrontation in the rational dialectics of the revolutionary proletariat (revolutionary criticism), an aspect that consists in considering *practice as the criterion of truth* as the ultimate reference.¹⁶ However, it does serve to illustrate the dominant sense and form of the critical-rational activity in the pre-party stage of Reconstitution, and also to illustrate the fundamental difference with the dominant context in the post-restitutional phase, in which social dialectics prevails.

Social dialectics is the confrontation between classes, the main terrain for **politics**. Politics, as the central axis of the activity of the revolutionary proletariat organized in the Communist Party, adopts as a starting point, instead of a certain state of individual consciousness—as it happened in the stage where its activity gravitated around the problems of Reconstitution—, a certain state of the social agents or of the historical subjects that make up the social matter; in short, a certain state of the class forces as a preamble for its political action. The basis is then not a dominant *individual subjective* disposition among the majority of the elements or of the vanguard detachments, as it happens during the Reconstitution; rather, the *social subjective* disposition of the proletariat as a class is adopted as a starting point and, from that disposition, its position as a political subject within the general context of the correlation of forces among all the classes of society. Thus, it is **social practice** which gives content to social dialectics from the point of view of the revolutionary development of the proletariat, and it is through social practice that the masses of the working class find the path for their conscious transformation. If the transformation of the consciousness of the masses is only possible through the transformation of the material bases of the society that engenders their false consciousness, the social revolution, that is to say, **the transformation of social relations, is only possible through the political shift of the proletarian masses towards the political positions of communism**. It should be noted that **we are not yet speaking of a conscious shift** or a premeditated revolutionary shift of the masses of the class towards communism, **but of their political shift**. The history of the World Proletarian Revolution demonstrates that the movement of the masses towards the positions of their vanguard (the Communist Party) is and can only be accomplished not through the conscious activity of said masses, but through political shifts favored by their conscious vanguard in relation to the concrete problems that affect those masses and that are placed in the very

¹⁶ Marx's Second Thesis on Feuerbach states the following: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question." *Theses on Feuerbach*, p. 3.

center of the class struggle by the historical events. For this reason, it is with the culmination of the Reconstitution, when the proletarian vanguard finishes formulating the **Program** of the Revolution, that the conditions will be established for the Communist Party to be able to act and influence the masses in this sense. Only social practice—as Lenin said—the very experience of the masses, allows their political development and, with it, the conditions for the transformation of the world as a premise for the transformation of humanity and its passage to a new and higher stage of civilization, where the future depends fully on the acts of the conscious will of the collectivity.

Let it be noted, finally, that we have deliberately separated—although in practice there is an indissoluble dialectical unity between the two—transformation of the world from transformation of humanity, in order to unambiguously show that it is a non-mechanical process: the transformation of humanity, of the consciousness of the masses, does not arise spontaneously from the transformation of the world. We must insist on Marx’s formula: “the alteration of men on a mass scale can only take place **in** a revolution”; that is to say, it is only a **means**, a **premise**, the adequate and necessary context to transform consciousness; but the revolution alone—and much less the revolution made from politics as a referent—is not that transformation. The Communist Party must raise the masses from political consciousness to the revolutionary conception of the world through class struggle in all its forms and spheres.

Revolutionary Communist Party

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