

Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist)

General characteristics and role of labour aristocracy in Spain

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Just as, according to Marx, "the working class is the most peculiar product of capitalism and the most revolutionary class", we can also say that labour aristocracy is a peculiar product of capitalism in its imperialist and monopolistic stage. Labour aristocracy practices a policy of alliances with its own bourgeoisie, against the interests of the whole class.

According to Marx and Engels, it was in the middle of the 19th. century in Britain, -at that time the leading imperialist and colonialist in the world- where most clearly this privileged strata of the working class appeared, dividing, on these basis, the British working class.

Lenin, in his article "Imperialism and the splitting of socialism", analyzes the objective basis of the -temporary- victory of opportunism in that country and explains that "that phenomenon" arises because the monopoly established with the excess of profits surpassing the normal profits of capitalism in the whole world, creates an alliance of the workers of one country with its own capitalists against the other countries.

"The bourgeoisie of a "great" imperialist power -states Lenin- has the economic capacity to suborn the higher strata of "its" workers..."

With the increase in number of imperialist and colonialist powers in the world, what had been once an exclusive phenomenon in Britain appeared also in the rest of the imperialist and developed powers, establishing on an international scale, the objective basis of opportunism and social-chauvinism, which marked the degenerataion of most of the leading parties of the II International.

In his famous work "Imperialism, highest step of capitalism", Lenin deepens his analysis of the working class in the historic stage of imperialism and concluded that opportunism and socialchauvinism only represented a minority of the proletariat, and that the duty of the revolutionaries is "to go further underneath" and deep existed in Lenins time the same as today the socialist and revisionist parties, were irreversibly sold out to the bourgeoisie and that these parties cannot "disappear before the socialist revolution, nor return towards the revolutionary proletariat..."

Indeed, labour aristocracy has historic and economic basis that lean on a great profits of the monopolies, wich allow the capitalists -as Lenin writes- to deny a part of the great profits, "whose importance is determined by the power and rate of development of imperialist and monopolist State-, to suborn parts of its own workers, establishing by these means a break inside the working class and an alliance between these suborned workers, and the capitalist class and its State.

Lenin stresses that opportunism is not an accident, neither a false step nor a treachery of a group of isolated people, but a social product of a historic age.

Having in mind that one of the main problems the revolutionary communists have

to face is to win the working class for revolution and to forge the widest unity of the workers, it is clear the importance of being acquainted with the situation and the specific characteristics of the different sectors of the working class, its historical background, situation and role it plays today. This acknowledgement is particularly necessary in the countries where the working class is relatively young or with unequal characteristics or shape. In Spain, for example, there exists a complex situation in relation with characteristics and shaping of the working class in the different industrial centres.

In industrial regions such as Cataluna, Euzkadi, Madrid, part of Valencia and Asturias, for example, although the working class developed since the beginning of the present century specially in the steel, textile, metallurgic and mining industries, it was not until the years 1960-1970 when the economic expansion took place, that these regions acquired a strong economic growth, establishing thus a mixed working class, with old and new characteristics.

Many other new industrial centers appeared in Spain during these ten years basically impelled by foreign invests, developing, in many places, a newly shaped working class, which had recently left the country fields and was backwards in general.

For example, the number of the agrarian active population which in 1960 represented 42% of the whole of the active population in Spain, it only represented 25% in 1970.

On the other hand, at this time, although local technocrats and those in charge of the economic policy, under the baton of the international economic and banking groups, established development plans, the economic growth was not harmonical, but kept in many regions those plans only in the paper with alternative stages of growth-inflation, and of stability and crisis.

Nevertheless, in these ten years of development there took place in Spain decisive changes in the structure of the country impelled by different reasons (the great number of foreign invests, specially from USA; foreign tourism, which created a whole commercial infrastructure of hotels, highways, etc., which didn't exist until that time; the money sent by the hundreds of thousands of emigrants. Spain was no longer an agrarian country but had become an industrial and urban one.

In 1960, agricultural represented 24% of the gross national product and gave occupation to 41.7% of the active population (which meant 4.9 millions of people). In 1970, those percentages decreased to 13% and 29.2% and the number of peasants was only 3.7 millions. Between 1965 and 1974 the agrarian sector grew at an annual rate of 2.5% and the industrial sector 9%. In 1960, only 27.7% of the Spanish population lived in cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants, while in 1970 this number grew 40%.

This badly planified and irregular development, also impelled by the general "boom" which took place in all the european countries after the Second World War and by the cheap labourhand in Spain, gave way to a complete abandonment up to several Spanish regions, due to internal emigration, which affected 3.195.039 people between 1963 and 1970 also external. More than one million active persons left Spain during that period.

Industrial centres such as Madrid grew in population between 1960-1973 in nearly 40% and in Euzkadi (northern vasque provinces) and Cataluna in more than 20%.

These synthesized figures on the history of the recent economic development in Spain and the shaping of the proletariat, show that an important part of the working class in our country has been created recently, and under the conditions of the fascist dictatorship and a decisive intervention of foreign capital.

Under these conditions, without the existence of real class trade unions, the patrons imposed the lowest salaries of Western Europe (apart from Portugal) and extremely hard and repressive labour conditions.

Under this peculiar situation, labour aristocracy and the yellow union leaders of Spain have performed a specially negative and reactionary role, as they not only assumed the safeguard of the patrons' interests, as is normal, but also of labour regulations and laws of a fascist State which forbided the rights of strike and political and labour association rights.

It is to be noted that the socialdemocrat trade union UGT (General Eorkers Union) nearly dissappeared or ceased its activities in the working class movement during the fascist dictatorship.

The Workers Commissions (CC.OO.), supported by Carillo's party since the important strikes that took place in Asturias in 1962 acted from the beginning under the revisionist line of class collaboration "national reconciliation", with its leaders leaning upon labour aristocracy and the most backwards sectors of the working class which rose in the rapid economic development (1960-1970), and also, on the tecnocrats and white-collar professionals that appeared during the same growth-period, under Franco.

Today, although the official fascist trade union has stopped its activities after Franco's death, the renewed UGT of socialist inspiration and the revisionist CCOO carry out the role of yellow trade unions and class collaboration. But, although being the two major trade unions of the country, they only group a minority of the whole working class, and its real political strength is based specially on labour aristocracy and the professional sectors. They are both heavily supported by the Government and the patrons and they collaborate and support the Agreements and production and labour plans of the Government and patrons in today's situation of crisis in Spain. But one thing are the yellow union leaders, (due to the differences that exist inside the working class) and another is an important part of the base of those unions. The contradictions between the interests of labour aristocracy and the patrons on one side and the rest of the workingclass on the other, are bigger and deeper each day. An important number of the workers that belong to those reformist unions search for the struggling path and class leaderships to safeguard their jobs and rights. The deepening of the crisis in important sectors such as the steel, ship construction building, industri and textile sectors, are making clearer the contradiction between these sectors of labour aristocracy and the yellow union leaders on the one hand, and the rest the working class.

For this reason, the Communist Party of Spain (marxist-leninist) considers of the greatest importance to intensify and extend its activity inside and at the base of the trade unions, UGT and CCOO, in order to isolate not only the yellow union leaders but also the contrarevolutionary sector of labour aristocracy.

In the actual stage of sharp economic crisis and the growing danger of a new war on an international scale between the superpowers for a new distribution of the world, it is most important to struggle for drawing out the working class from the influence of socialdemocracy and revisionism, as it is in periods of

war preparation when the reactionary Governments lean themselves on opportunism which is the base of chauvinism to mobilize the working class for its war purposes.

It was in his article "The Bankruptcy of the II International" when Lenin denounced "the economic bases of social chauvinism and opportunism in the workers' movement is one and the same thing: the alliance between a small number of the highest strata of the proletariat and petitbourgeoisie -which make use of the crumbs of the privileges of"its" national capital against the proletarian masses, against the working and oppressed masses in general. The old division between the socialists between the opportunist current and revolutionary current, at the time of the II International, suits to the new division between chauvinists and internationalists".

In the present situation it is worth to remember what Lenin said when he warned that "never government needs so much of an agreement between all the parties of the ruling classes, AND THE PEACEFUL SUBMISSION OF THE OPPRESSED CLASSES TO IT AS IN WAR TIME"(Lenin:"Imperialism and the splitting of socialism").

THE WORKING CLASS IS NOT A CHEMICALLY PURE PRODUCT

"Capitalism -states Lenin- would cease to be capitalism if the proletariat was not surrounded by an intermixed crowd of elements which start the transition from proletariat to semiproletariat, from semiproletariat to small peasantry and small patron in general, from small peasantry to middle peasantry and so on; if inside the own proletariat did not exist groups with a higher or lower development; divisions according to their territorial origin, job, religion, etc." In conclusion, the working class is not an homogeneous class.

For this reason, the revolutionary communists must bear in mind that inside the working class takes place a strong battle to achieve and maintain both the revolutionary ideas as well as those of the bourgeoisie, counterrevolution and class collaboration.

There also exist all sorts of pressures, both political and material, from the patrons and the reactionary ideology. We cannot forget that the revolutionary ideas work their way up through the lessons and the experience that the working class itself accumulates throughout its partial struggles, and also thanks to the leaderships and the ideology of more conscious elements organized in the Party, who teach and organize it, to fight opportunism and that show the path of class struggle and revolution, the working class as a whole.

But Stalin pointed out that "the strength of the reactionary leaders cannot be destroyed by a single blow".

In fact we cannot forget that the strength of opportunism, today headed by socialdemocracy and modern revisionism of all colours, political corruption, in the integration of the opportunist cadres in the apparatus of the bourgeoisie State, tow-halls and parliament etc.

For all these reasons, the struggle against opportunism and chauvinism in the working class whose objective base is labour aristocracy cannot be attempted as a unilateral, lieal and quick battle as a battle to decided soon, in a few hours or in a few battles. It is a long, difficult, complex and multifacetic battle.

On the light of the objective reasons for the divisions of the working class between the opportunist and socialchauvinist current based on labour aristocracy on one hand, and the rest of the proletariat on the other, it becomes clear the impossibility of unity between the revolutionary workers and the OPPORTUNIST UNION LEADERS and the necessity of establishing a very different way of acting on our side with the workers, wherever they are, joined or not to the unions, and with the revisionist and socialdemocrat labour leaders.

Analyzing the phenomenon of the division of the working class and the necessity of struggling against opportunism and for revolutionary unity, Lenin concluded:

"Under capitalism it is not possible to think seriously in the possibility of organizing the majority of the proletariats. And in second place -and this is the main point- it is not so much the number of members of an organization, as the real objective sense of its policy: if it is useful to free them from capitalism or if it represents the interests of a minority, its conciliation with capitalism".

Today, when the socialdemocrat and revisionist currents, together or separately, make efforts to carry the working class along the path of opportunism, chauvinism and class collaboration and support to the bourgeoisie and imperialism all over the world, it is of vital importance to bear in mind Lenin's teachings and to practice a line of revolutionary unity of the workers based on the interests...