

ALBANO NUNES

*The World Communist
and Revolutionary Movement:
Issues of Relevance in the
Ideological Struggle*

Valuing the recent 15th International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties (IMCWP), which was held in Lisbon on November 2013, the statement adopted by the PCP Central Committee meeting of December 14 and 15 states: "fully aware of the existence of inevitable differences of opinion, and even of serious disagreements, the PCP will continue committed to strengthen and ensure the unity and effectiveness in action of the World Communist and Revolutionary Movement, based on a frank and fraternal assessment of the common problems, and on the principles of equality, mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual solidarity, and rejecting the different forms of opportunism, whether expressed as adaptation to the system or through dogmatic and sectarian expressions." It is about the dense political and ideological content of this small paragraph of a PCP Central Committee statement that we consider it useful to make some considerations.

The PCP's analysis of the international situation and of the communist and revolutionary movement is contained in the

resolutions of its Congresses, namely the 19th Congress, which was held in December 2012, as well as in the Message of Greetings by comrade Jerónimo de Sousa and in the PCP's statement to the 15th IMCWP!¹ What follows is merely a contribution towards the necessary clarification of the PCP's position regarding some issues that have recently assumed greater proportions, both as regards attitudes towards enshrined principles of relationship between Communist parties, and in relation to serious differences in the analysis of the international situation and on the strategy and tactics of Communist parties.

1.

The issue of the struggle for socialism and all the associated issues regarding stages and paths of the revolutionary process, as well as the indispensable consideration of the concrete situations and of national specificities in the elaboration of the programme of the Communist Party, is surely one of most relevant questions on which there are, not merely legitimate differences of opinion, but also schematic simplifications and confusions.

In historical terms, we are living in the epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism, which was inaugurated by the October Revolution, almost one hundred years ago. But in the short and medium-term time frames, we are living through times of counter-revolution and social regression.

This situation embodies a contradiction which places Communist parties before serious challenges of a political and ideological nature, prominent among which is the need to combine the struggle for concrete and immediate goals, with the goal of socialism and communism, taking into account each country's concrete situation.

This is a dialectical (and therefore not a mechanical) liaison, which neither separates stages and tactical moments of the revolutionary struggle with unsurmountable barriers, nor confuses different goals, stages and phases of a single process of social transformation.

This liaison is contrary, both to taking up purely defensive positions and leaving the prospect of any revolutionary advance to the distant future, thereby opening the way for reformist opportunism,

THE MARXIST

as well as to the underestimation of immediate goals in the name of the final goal which is inscribed in the epoch of imperialism, that is, socialism. The masses of the people, that irreplaceable protagonist of any revolution worthy of that name, are not won over, or even mobilized, without a clear prospect for change and revolution. But the masses cannot be won over, and real advances made on the path to the proletarian revolution, by ignoring or jumping over stages, underestimating immediate goals, simply agitating the ultimate goals.²

There is no “revolutionary” rhetoric that can replace the persistent and day-to-day work among the working class and the masses, building the Communist party, building the class trade unions and other forms of popular organization and unity, driving the mass struggle, promoting broad social alliances and their political expression, allying (we insist) the struggle for concrete and immediate demands with the popularization among the masses of the only alternative that can, in the final analysis, bring progress, social justice and peace: the power of the working class, the abolition of exploitation of man by man, socialism and communism.

2.

The contradiction between the revolutionary possibilities of the historical epoch and the conjunctural situation which the PCP defines as a time of resistance and the accumulation of strength, becomes even clearer against the backdrop of the ever sharper basic contradictions of present-day capitalism: between capital and labour, between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production which shackle them, between the socialization of production and its private appropriation, between the potential to solve Humanity’s problems which is created by scientific and technical progress and the fact that they are becoming more acute.

As we stated at the 19th PCP Congress, in world terms, never was the need for the revolutionary overcoming of capitalism so relevant and necessary, as is the need to build a new society without exploiters nor exploited people. However, if we consider that the material and objective prerequisites for the socialist revolution are ripe, and if with every passing day it becomes more obvious that imperialism’s social

basis of support is becoming narrower and that it is incapable of responding to the requirements of our time, it is equally evident that there is a relative backwardness in the subjective factor, that the revolutionary organization and awareness of the working masses is lagging behind, as is the Communist and revolutionary movement, that the institutions of production and reproduction of bourgeois ideology have a real impact.

This does not mean that the path of diversified revolutionary processes, including socialist revolutions, is closed. The history of the social and national emancipation of the workers and peoples is full of about-turns, unexpected leaps forward and surprising achievements. And even today, there are original processes of social transformation that are on the move and which, whatever the limitations, contradictions and uncertainties that surround them, must be valued, studied and defended from the onslaughts of imperialism and reaction.

But the contradiction on a world level, between the maturing of objective conditions and the delays in subjective conditions remains. And in the context of a very intense ideological struggle, it creates the breeding ground for opportunisms of an opposite nature. Both of the right and of the “left”. Both of social-democratizing renunciation and adaptation to the existing state of affairs (a liquidationist trend which, after “euro-communism”, had a new upsurge with the disappearance of the USSR and the defeats of socialism in Europe) or of leaps forward which proclaim the socialist revolution as an immediate goal of Communist parties, regardless of the conditions in which they operate. Concrete expressions of this reality can be found, on the right, in the “European Left Party”³ and some of its member parties, and on “the left”, in the positions of some Communist parties which before, during and already after the 15th International Meeting of Communist and Workers’ Parties, have been marked by dogmatism and sectarianism and by a scholastic and petrified view of Marxism-Leninism.⁴

3.

The international context in which revolutionary forces are acting is marked by two fundamental facts.

THE MARXIST

One is socialism's defeats at the end of the 20th century, the brutal ensuing change in the balance of forces, the weakening of revolutionary forces which resulted in the ensuing counter-attack by imperialism to recoup the positions which it had lost throughout the 20th century, in particular after the defeat in World War II of Nazi-fascism, the most reactionary and terrorist sector of capital.

At the same time, there is the world-wide impact of the present stage of the crisis of capitalism, with the violent and multi-pronged onslaught by big capital – increasingly financialized, speculative, rentier and parasitic, a fact which is inseparable from the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. In its quest for high rates of profit, big capital seeks to impose upon the workers and the peoples a social regression of historic proportions. It is with this goal that we see an ever more widespread brutal repression of popular struggles, a growth in racist and extreme right-wing forces and in the wars of aggression against peoples and sovereign countries.

With the disappearance of the powerful counter-weight represented by the world socialist system, the world has become more dangerously exposed to the exploitative, oppressive and aggressive nature of capitalism, to the dynamics of its irreconcilable contradictions, to the consequences of the crises of over-production and over-accumulation of capital, as is the case of the current crisis that eclouded in 2008 in the USA with the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy.

However, as the Political Resolution of the 19th PCP Congress states, “the web of contradictions in which the capitalist system is enmeshed is so dense that, in the context of an upsurge of the struggle of the workers and peoples, great dangers of civilizational regression, and even for the very existence of Humankind, co-exist with a great potential for progressive and even revolutionary transformation. This is a reality which the Communists, aware of the fact that capitalism will never hand over power of its own free will, must keep in mind in their day-to-day action, always linking the struggle against big capital's offensive and for concrete and immediate goals with the struggle for profound transformations of an anti-monopolist nature and for a socialist society”.

It is evident that materializing the potential for an about-turn towards a progressive and revolutionary course depends essentially

on the roots which the revolutionary vanguard can grow among the masses, and from the correspondence between its program and political line, and the concrete society in which it operates.

Imperialist globalisation is a reality that increasingly influences the situations in the various countries. But it does not make them uniform. On the contrary, they are extraordinarily diverse, as diverse are the immediate tasks and the programmatic goals which confront each Communist Party, even taking into account that in the epoch of imperialism, any process of social transformation, any revolutionary process, if it is to achieve its goals, must place socialism on the horizon. This was the case with the Portuguese Democratic and National Revolution – which took the path towards socialism, that was inscribed as a goal in the 1976 Constitution of the Republic. This is also the case with the Advanced Democracy that is inscribed in the PCP's current program and which we consider an integral and inseparable part of the struggle for socialism in Portugal.

It is true that general laws of the revolutionary process exist – namely those related to that role of the working class and the masses of the people, the Party, political power, and the property of the means of production. But life has also confirmed that the paths for social transformation and revolution are increasingly varied. There is nothing more negative for a Communist Party, for a political force that claims to be a revolutionary vanguard, than to seek to carry out the struggle with timeless formulas, that would be valid under all circumstances; than to seek to respond to the pressing problems of the class struggle with clichés and preconceived solutions that are out of tune with reality; than to copy/export solutions that may be valid in a given country, but may not correspond to the concrete situation that exists in another country; than to lose sight of the fact that the revolution is a living and creative social process and that the concrete analysis of concrete situations is the living essence of Marxism-Leninism. The existence of general laws of the revolutionary process does not only not stand in contradiction with the existence of national specificities, as it presupposes a dialectical relation which a Marxist-Leninist can in no way ignore. The process of the Portuguese Revolution, in which the PCP as the “vanguard of the working class and of all workers” played (and plays) an irreplaceable role, enshrines, in this respect, valuable lessons.

THE MARXIST

Lessons that confirm the need to not underestimate, and much less deny, the importance of the national issue in the process of social transformation, as well as its correlation with the class issue. In the Portuguese case, in which there was the original circumstance of Portugal being at the same time a colonizing and a colonised country, this issue took on particular importance, and the anti-fascist revolution also acquired a national character by placing among its key goals the immediate recognition of the right of the peoples of the colonies to their independence, as well as the liberation of Portugal from imperialism. And today, faced with the very serious situation of dependence and foreign interference, in which the participation in the European process of capitalist integration is a key component, the PCP fights for a patriotic and left-wing alternative which, opening the road to an Advanced Democracy, may defend and ensure national independence and may break with the serious constraints upon national sovereignty which, as the facts are proving, has a profound class content.

The struggle of the workers and the peoples in defense of national sovereignty is a fundamental front in the struggle against imperialism, which is in the interests of all anti-monopoly classes and strata, and in which the working class is in the front ranks. It is incomprehensible that there are parties that deny its importance, as well as the importance of strengthening, in association with the Communist movement, the world-wide anti-imperialist front.

In the PCP's Communist identity, patriotism and internationalism are indissociable.

4.

Capitalism has confirmed and confirms, even in a context of deepening structural crisis, capacities for resistance and recovery that had been wrongly considered to be exhausted. This became particularly evident in the early nineties of the last century, with the bitter defeats of socialism. But in the PCP's analysis, which is firmly anchored in the theory of scientific socialism, in dialectical and historical materialism, that fact has never challenged the characterization of the historic epoch in which we are living, as the epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism. The PCP's 13th

(Extraordinary) Congress of May 1990 was, in this respect, unequivocal.

If it is true that, in global, world-wide, terms, we are still living in times of a revolutionary ebb, of resistance and the accumulation of strength, the reality is that the class struggle - that creative sculptor of History - did not stop, nor could it stop anywhere. It only took on new configurations and became violently more acute in recent years.

Everywhere, under very diverse forms, resistance is growing to the ever greater exploitation of wage labour, to the revanchist destruction of rights that had been won through the workers' and peoples' struggle. Big struggles, general strikes, mass demonstrations have, and continue to, take place in the more developed capitalist countries and in the periphery of the capitalist system. The peoples that are subjected to imperialism's offensive of exploitation and recolonization resist. Countries, such as Cuba, persist in the goal of building socialist societies. In Latin America, there are ongoing processes of sovereignty and social progress which are a source of hope, some of them with revolutionary characteristics. Within the framework of capitalism's law of unequal development, with the relative decline of the USA and other great powers and the emergence of important regional powers, there is a massive process of realignment of forces which is re-drawing the world's economic and political map, creating new problems, contradictions and opportunities which challenge the boldness and creativity of the revolutionary forces, as well as their internationalist cooperation.

Confronted with such a complex, unstable and uncertain global situation, and with its diversified regional and national expressions, it is only natural for differences of viewpoints and assessments, differences of opinion and even disagreements on important issues of revolutionary strategy and tactics, to arise within the communist movement and in the anti-imperialist camp, even regarding relevant issues in the history of the world communist and revolutionary movement. This is all the more natural as the Communist and revolutionary parties have diversified trajectories, experiences and social rooting, they struggle in diverse conditions and they are in different stages of the struggle for socialism, having to confront different immediate tasks.

In the PCP's opinion – and this is a substantial disagreement

THE MARXIST

with Parties that seek to create structured, and politically and ideologically homogenized, forms of cooperation – differences of opinion and disagreements between Communist parties should not prevent their cooperation in the struggle against the common enemy. Even if, momentarily, the leadership of this or that Party challenges characteristics that we consider fundamental in a Communist Party,⁵ this should not prevent common or convergent action in favour of the emancipation of the workers and the peoples.

The PCP has its own positions, which it states with total frankness and which it firmly defends in the face of its critics and detractors. But in the same way as it never accepted, nor accepts, lessons and impositions from anyone, it equally does not seek to impose them upon others. On the contrary, it respects and seeks to understand the positions of others and to take into account, in its own assessment, the assessment of other Parties. And it does not forget the valuable teaching of Álvaro Cunhal, according to which there are no problems which Communist Parties cannot overcome through “dialogue, friendly debate and the quest for common solutions”,⁶ respecting the principles of equality, mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, reciprocal solidarity, principles which have been forged by the experience of the world Communist movement.

This is a vital issue for the role of Communist parties and for the Communist ideal in the world. More than differences of opinion and disagreements, it is the breach of these principles, the public criticism and polemics for which some Parties have unfortunately already opted, it is revivalist attempts to create a “leading centre” or to adopt the line of this or that Party, which is considered the “guide” or “reference”, that can endanger the strengthening of the Communist movement and cause serious harm to its unity.

The times of centralization and discipline, which were necessary to break with the opportunism of the II International and to forge Leninist revolutionary parties, as was the case with the Communist International, have passed. The internationalist cooperation between Communist Parties, having at its core class solidarity, proletarian internationalism, will be all the stronger, the more rooted they are among the masses and the greater the capacity of each Party to autonomously define its revolutionary line.

The Portuguese Revolution was an unfinished revolution, but that does not make it less important in the Portuguese people's long road to liberation,⁷ nor less valuable as a legacy of experiences and lessons for the world Communist and revolutionary movement. The PCP is proud of its theoretical and practical contribution for the liberation of Portugal from almost half a century of fascist dictatorship. It is proud of its Communist identity. It is proud of its programme for the anti-fascist revolution, which life confirmed to a rare extent, with the liquidation of State monopoly capitalism and with the major achievements such as the nationalizations, workers' control, the agrarian reform, democratic local government. It is proud of the liberating impact of the April Revolution.

The PCP knows that the Portuguese revolution, with its profound traits of originality and revolutionary creativity, confirms central theses of Marxism-Leninism, namely regarding the central issue of the State.⁸ But obviously, the PCP not only does not consider that our experience and the experience of the Portuguese Revolution can be taken as a blueprint of universal validity, as it warns – as Lenin himself did in relation to the October Revolution – against any mechanical copying of solutions. There are not, and there cannot be, “models” for revolutions. The Portuguese revolution, like all other genuine revolutions, emerged from the concrete reality and contradictions of Portuguese society and from the concrete alignment of class forces in Portugal, an alignment that was shaped by the role of the working class and of its Party and the creativity of the masses of the people in movement, in the context of that decisive and original alliance which was the People-MFA alliance. To the extent that, despite the absence of a revolutionary power, it managed to impose profound social and economic transformations which paved the way for socialism in Portugal.

The Portuguese Communists have never, and never will, use what they consider to be even the most solidly acquired revolutionary legacy of their Party to preach lessons to whomever. Even more so, because unfortunately, in the experience of the world Communist and revolutionary movement, there is no shortage of dramatic negative examples of breaches to the well-known Marxist precept that

THE MARXIST

“revolutions can be neither copied, nor exported”. Nor do they emerge from manuals, as if they were archetypes, or an Idea to which reality must conform. This mistake, which is often made by Parties that seek in this way to find quick solutions for problems confronting them, is precisely the inverse of Marxism-Leninism, of which some claim to be the most faithful interpreters.

A patriotic and internationalist Party, a Party with the experience of 93 years of struggle and with the historical experience of the Communists and revolutionaries from all over the world, the PCP will continue committed to ensure a stronger, more united and effective world Communist and revolutionary movement, seeking to contribute towards more profound cooperation and solidarity in its midst which, respecting each Party’s independence and history and focused on unity in action, values that which unites the forces that oppose Capital and imperialism’s onslaught. It is this which the masses expect from Communists.

NOTES

¹ See the dossier on the 15th International Meeting of Communist and Workers’ Parties, published in issue 328 of *O Militante*, of January 2014.

² In defense of the Party’s programmatic line and in fighting against different forms of right-wing and “left” opportunism, two works by Álvaro Cunhal deserve to be highlighted: “Revolutionary action, capitulation and adventure” and “Petty-bourgeois radicalism with a socialist façade”.

³ The PCP is not a member, nor does it have relations with, the European Left Party. In the Political resolution of the 19th PCP Congress it is stated: “the reasons that led the PCP to not join the European Left Party remain valid. Reality has confirmed the warnings made by the Portuguese Communists that a structure of a supranational and reformist nature, with the characteristics of the ELP, would not only not contribute towards the unity and cooperation of Communist and progressive forces in Europe, as it would introduce new factors of division, separation and misunderstanding which would render more difficult any advances in the cooperation and solidarity among Communist and left forces in Europe, and which would impact also in other spaces of cooperation, namely the European United Left/Nordic Green Left Group in the European Parliament”. In the meantime, the PCP has relations of friendship with Parties that are in the ELP as full members or as observers.

⁴ “The PCP has Marxism-Leninism as its theoretical basis: a materialist and dialectical view of the world, a scientific tool to analyze reality and a guide for action which is being constantly enriched and under renewal, giving answers to new phenomenal situations, processes and trends of development. In articulation with events and with the incessant progress of knowledge, this view of the world is necessarily creative and, for this reason, contrary to any dogmatization as well as to the opportunistic revision of its fundamental principles and concepts” (PCP Constitution, article 2).

⁵ In the PCP’s assessment, fundamental characteristics of the Communist identity are its

World Communist and Revolutionary Movement

class nature, the theoretical basis of Marxism-Leninism, the project of a socialist society, inner-Party democracy based on democratic centralism, a mass line, patriotism and internationalism.

- ⁶ “There are different points of view and even more or less serious disagreements between Communist Parties. In order to overcome them, absolutely necessary are dialogue, a friendly debate, the quest for common solutions. Through this path, we think that there are, among Communists, no problems without solutions” (Álvaro Cunhal, press conference in Beijing, on December 10, 1986).
- ⁷ “The April Revolution’s main values have grown deep roots in Portuguese society, and are projected as objective realities, requirements, experiences and aspirations into Portugal’s democratic future. The advanced democracy proposed by the PCP to the Portuguese people is a historical follow-up to the programme for the democratic and national revolution drawn up and adopted in 1965, and to the April revolution’s ideals, victories and achievements, which are also of historic value. The advanced democracy that the PCP proposes, projects, consolidates and develops the April values into Portugal’s future.” (PCP Programme).
- ⁸ The Portuguese Revolution confirmed the issue of the State as a central issue in any revolution. One of its main shortcomings was the fact that it never managed to set up a democratic State. Despite profoundly hit, the counter-revolutionary forces always managed to retain strong positions within the State apparatus and are today committed to a new revision of the Constitution, in order to place it entirely at the service of the ruling classes.