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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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12.12.2023

The Challenges for the Left

The lesson seems obvious: materially, it is not a question of imitating or surpassing capitalism in the production of wealth, but of seeking an economy that ensures the satisfaction of basic needs and contributes to resolving the contradictions between humanity and nature.



The need for a theoretical foundation to guide their programs would probably be the greatest challenge for the left. This theoretical reference is precisely what makes it possible to define not only the strategic tasks but also the immediate tasks. Without a long-term reference, a left-wing political force runs the risk of limiting itself to what provides the opportunity (i.e., classic "opportunism"), leaving the final goal as a simple reference to reassure consciences; On the contrary, limiting itself to defining this strategic objective without formulating the immediate tasks, forgetting the need to propose realistic objectives to the social forces of change, turns the left into a useless reference point and almost always turned into a sort of sterile preacher of a bright tomorrow. Experience proves that the most sensible thing to do is to ensure that the achievement of the immediate objectives (generally the so-called reforms) serves to advance towards the

strategic objectives (revolution). It would then be a matter of achieving the right relationship between the long-term tasks - the strategy, the search for a radical change, that is, one that goes to the root of the problem - and the imperative need to propose immediate objectives, realistic judging by the correlation of forces. The experience of the great contemporary revolutions indicates that achieving this harmonious combination of the immediate with the strategic is not easy, but it seems to be the most appropriate way for the agents of change (masses and leaders) to reach the necessary levels of political consciousness and organization. A "*true consciousness*", in the terms of [George Lukács](#), and an effective harmony between the masses and the vanguard, as shown by the experiences of the successful revolutionary processes of the popular sectors in the recent past.



After the resounding defeat of the Soviet model and the no less lamentable decline of European social democracy, the left should take up the indispensable task of making a critical analysis of both experiences, since they also owe the greatest advances of the popular movement and in particular of the workers' movement. The Soviet Union, no less than the People's Republic of China, succeeded in lifting these two great countries out of material backwardness and misery; The USSR was, without a doubt, the determining factor in the defeat of fascism, thereby giving humanity an important respite in its struggle against the most barbaric forms of the capitalist system. Social democracy, for its part, played a decisive role in the establishment of the so-called welfare state in Europe, which

gave the working class and popular sectors the highest standard of living they had ever achieved. But the so-called "really existing socialism" that achieved indisputable material objectives did not produce significant advances in the profound renewal of the system of political participation, much less remarkable achievements in the sphere of culture, of basic values, those intimate springs that almost automatically determine human behavior. Surely the emphasis on the material aspects of the Soviet model and the little or no concern for generating a new culture lead to the emergence and development of a new bourgeoisie (public sector entrepreneurship) and the maintenance of the cultural patterns of the old order. It will be the bureaucracy and the managers of the state-owned enterprises who in various ways end up becoming the new capitalists. The lack of a true cultural revolution would explain why religiosity and nationalism appeared in the old socialist camp that were supposed to have been overcome by rational thought and internationalism. The lesson seems obvious: materially, it is not a question of imitating or surpassing capitalism in the production of wealth, but of seeking an economy that ensures the satisfaction of basic needs and contributes to resolving the contradictions between humanity and nature. At present, this objective means democratically deciding what to produce, what not to produce and to what extent, something that clashes with the prevailing consumerist model and will produce the opposition of at least part of the population. In any case, this has always been the case: in the great socio-cultural changes, a part of the population emigrates; It's just a matter of keeping that percentage as low as possible.



The reformism that underpins the so-called Welfare State in Europe is the result of a tactical-temporal alliance between big capital and labour managed by social democrats and communists in the name of the workers' and people's movement. Social democracy, initially, sought the reform of capitalism as an advance to socialism but ended up settling for "humanized" capitalism. He was supported above all by the higher-income sections of the working class and the many middle strata that modern capitalism has enormously enlarged. The Communists, on the other hand, although they maintained the socialist aim, in practice it was only in language, for in practice they did not transcend social democracy. The former ended up folding their reformist banners of yesteryear and unabashedly embraced the neoliberal model, while the latter (with few exceptions) promoted the so-called "Eurocommunism" that in many respects does the same thing: giving up its revolutionary slogans.

These being the two main currents of the socialist movement, due to their dimensions and their achievements, it seems indispensable today that the left – especially that which proposes to overcome capitalism and begin the construction of a radically new social order – must make a critical analysis of these two experiences, looking for the reasons for their exhaustion and defeat and deducing from this the indispensable tasks to formulate a new model. starting with an economic model that proposes realistic ways to "*expropriate the expropriators*" (the traditional slogan of the workers' movement and an inalienable objective if we want to go to the root of the problem); that seeks to construct an essentially

different political order in which direct democracy is adequately combined with the indispensable and necessary forms of delegated power, and that advances as far as is feasible in laying the foundations of a new culture and social order that will make it possible for *"in place of the old bourgeois society, With its classes and class antagonisms, an association will arise in which the free development of each will be the condition for the free development of all"* (another classic slogan of the proletariat).

Juan Diego García Para La Pluma, December 7, 2023

Edited by [Maria Piedad Ossaba](#)

La Pluma. net 10.12.2023