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Two lines struggle in the Communist Party

In the Statute approved by the 1st Congress of the (new) Italian Communist Party (paragraph 6) it is written that:

“The main organizational principles of the Party are the democratic centralism and the two lines struggle. The two principles are complementary: they are the two opposite terms of a dialectical unity. In some circumstances the first of the two terms is the principal. In some other circumstances the second of the two terms is principal.

(...)

The principle of the two lines struggles teaches us that in the Communist Party two trends are always existing, one pushing onwards and the other restraining. They are the joint effect of the class contradiction (of bourgeoisie's influence and of the struggle against it), of the contradiction between the true and the false and of the contradiction between the new and the old. In some periods the two trends are complementary and both contribute to party's development. In other periods they become antagonistic and incompatible. The left trend has to transform the right one. If the right trend proves to be unyielding, the left one has to expel it.”

This rule of our Statute arouses many kinds of objections, both in the Italian and in the International Communist Movement. It is in the nature of things that this takes place. The two lines struggle is a principle not universally accepted and applied in the communist movement.

Firstly, we have to apply (to learn to apply) the rule of our Statute inside us. We have to learn to use the two lines struggle in our Party's life. We shall better and better understand the principle of the two lines struggle, we shall understand it in a more and more practical way the more we shall apply it.

Secondly, we have to make understand this principle in a just way, in the Party and among the comrades, in Italy and abroad, in the International Communist Movement (ICM).

Thirdly, we have to defend it against the objections and distortions, against the misunderstandings and the denigrations.

The two lines struggle is an indispensable organizational principle.

It is one of the five main contributions by Maoism to the theoretical patrimony of the communist movement (see <http://www.nuovopci.it/arcspip/article17d5.html>). All the communist parties and the ICM on the whole need to adopt it in order to speed up the new birth of the communist movement and the proletarian revolution.

The incomprehension of this principle is one of the limits of the old communist movement.

The two lines and the struggle between them exist in every communist party, even if Communists are not aware of it. As a matter of fact, they come from the dialectics between proletariat and bourgeoisie (the two classes, the two ways, the two lines), between new and old, between right and wrong. The difference brought by Maoism is that the left trend is aware of this fact and directs (decides and tries to direct) the two lines struggle. In a communist party that does not recognize this contribution of Maoism, the two lines exist but the struggle between them develops blindly.

In the history of the communist movement, already starting from the epoch of Marx and Engels, of the Communists' League (1847-1850) and of the First International (1864-1872), the existence of two lines and the struggle between them are a constant datum. Before Maoism, the principle was not recognized. So, in the communist movement the two lines struggle has been carried out instinctively, in a more or less fruitful way depending on the periods, on the parties and on the level of assimilation of the dialectical materialism by single comrades and parties.

Lenin fought the two lines struggle in a masterly manner, even if he did not recognise and formulate the two lines struggle as organizational principle of the communist party.

In the writing *Bourgeois Intellectuals' Methods* (June 1914), he clearly says: "See the history [of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party] (it is not a fault for a Marxist to take in account the history of the movement!); it shows you a nearly twenty year struggle against the bourgeois currents of "economism" (1895-1902), of Menshevism (1903-1908) of liquidationism (1908-1914)."

In the *Report of the CC of the RSDWP to the International Socialist Office of Bruxelles* (13 July 1914), Lenin also signs the borders of the party and of the two lines struggle in the party: "If some party or group definitely and precisely proposes a program or a strategy with which our party can not agree in principle, the problem of the majority, of course, makes no sense. For example, if the Revolutionary Socialist Party (left populists), which differs from our party in the program and strategy, will gain the majority of workers in Russia, this will not make us give up our line at all. "

This concerns the members of our Party and of the CARC Party that have been expelled or resigned in the Third Active Ideological Struggle (March 2009). The following events clearly confirmed that their conceptions were not compatible with ours. Even those of them who have continued to declare themselves Communists, in the group of the Coordination of Communist Collectives (CoCoCo) they formed, have quickly abandoned the conception, the analysis and the party line that until a few months before they said to share and even to defend and to carry out most truly and genuinely than everybody else. They do not even believe to be obliged to explain their intellectual evolution to themselves and to the communist movement, so much they were convinced of the positions of the Party! This also explains why poor were the results of the work for which they were responsible.

The incomprehension of the two lines struggle weakened the action of the left trend and facilitated the victory of the right trend in the first Communist International (1919-1943 formally, but actually 1956). It was also a weak point in Stalin's direction. This incomprehension showed itself several times in the history of the communist parties of the first socialist countries, particularly in the history of the Soviet Communist Party, after that private ownership of means of production had essentially been abolished. Then it was said that in the Soviet Union antagonistic classes were no longer existing (1936). The unity of the Communist Party was mainly entrusted in administrative methods (control commissions, political police). This incomprehension showed itself also in the communist parties of the imperialist countries. Instead of pursuing the unity of the party with the two lines struggle, the unity was mainly or even solely entrusted in administrative procedures and organs of the party (control commissions).

This practice has greatly weakened the action of the left trend when it was in the minority. Rather than resorting to self-criticism to overcome its limitations that made it become a minority in the party and to criticize the right trend, the left trend gave freedom of action to the right one in the name of party unity, or began to weave plots and conspiracies such as the right trend was doing, without having the strength that bourgeoisie's support was giving to the right.

Even today the Communist parties that have not adopted Maoism, and therefore do not recognize the organizational principle of the two lines struggle, are used to resort solely or mainly to administrative measures (control commission) to defend the party from deviations. An exemplary and important case to us is the Marxist Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD).

We shall make the better use of the principle of the two lines struggle in the life of our party, we shall defend it much better and we shall fight much more effectively for its assimilation, the better we understand what two lines struggle means.

In the article *The eighth discriminating factor of Nicola P.*, published in *La Voce* No 10 and translated into English, Spanish and French (see <http://www.nuovopci.it/arcspip/article17d5.html>) the principle is well exposed. Each comrade can then improve its understanding, reading that article. There are however some objections put forward later in Italy and abroad that deserve attention.

There are two kinds of objections. Some deny that the principle of the two lines struggle and the principle of democratic centralism are two poles of a contradiction in the life of communist parties. Others deny that there are two lines in the communist party and the struggle between them.

The first kind of objections emerges in the field of organizations and individuals who call themselves Maoists. It was put out immediately after the publication of our Statute by the Coordination of Communist Collectives (CoCoCo, former members of the caravan of our Party) in a Statement (April 14, 2010). It says that the two principles can not constitute the two poles of a contradiction because “the two things are different in nature.”

Now the two principles are certainly different in nature, otherwise they would not be two different things (they would be the same thing) and they could not even be the two opposites of a contradiction. The thesis according to which the contradiction exists only between things of the same nature is totally unfounded. Let us consider some contradictions everybody knows and recognizes. Do bourgeoisie and proletariat have the same nature? Do state and mass organizations have the same nature? Do use value and exchange value have the same nature? If two things have the same nature, how do they differ? How could they oppose?

It is clear that the contradiction can exist only between things having different nature, that are different by nature. Diversity is a necessary but not sufficient condition for two things forming a unity of opposites. The main communist theoretician of contradiction, Mao Tse-tung, said that “if two things are different, under certain circumstances they are the opposites of a contradiction” (see for example *Note di lettura 1937 a Materialismo dialettico e materialismo storico di M.B. Mitin e Note di lettura 1937 a Filosofia e Vita di Ai Ssu-chi*). In this case, the “certain circumstances” are the communist party that assumes both principles (different by nature) as its organizational principles.

The conception according to which two different things can not constitute, under certain circumstances, two poles of a contradiction, and therefore mutually exclusive, serves to CoCoCo to say that in the communist party “there will always be a minority,” and then minority and majority have to live together: long live the cliques and the fractions. It is another

way of saying that in the communist party the open and frank debate (OFD) is a never ending, permanent (and thus inconclusive and academic) discussion about everything and nothing, an excuse to conduct a liberal and opportunist behaviour, an opportunity to show off erudition, skill in discussing and an excuse to waste time. They are theses and wails that we well knew in the Third Active Ideological Struggle. We assert that the two lines and the two lines struggle are related to the task that phase after phase the party must carry out and to the line that the party must follow. So they arise when the party faces new tasks and problems, they are related to the task and the issue on the agenda and they have their final settlement in the verification by practice. Ultimately it is the practice that gives evidence of what is just and what is wrong, what is in the interest of the proletariat and the revolution and what is in the interest of the bourgeoisie and of the preservation of capitalism. If in the communist party the left trend is a minority, it means that it is not up to the task the party is facing. Then this left trend must transform itself (criticize itself) in order to be up to the task. If the right trend tries to expel the left one from the party, and if the left trend is up to the task, evil befall the right for it.

The second kind of objections appears in the communist movement in the struggle for making accept Maoism as the third higher stage of communist thought, after Marxism and Leninism. In an ongoing discussion with the Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) of Turkey and Northern Kurdistan, the exponents of MLKP raised three kinds of arguments about the two lines struggle in the Communist Party.

1. They assert that “if we accept the permanent presence of two lines in the party, its unity is at risk.”
2. They assert that the conception “of the two lines struggle as an engine for development of the party is wrong and is similar to the concept of competition as a engine of development of capitalism.”
3. They assert that “in the party there are not two lines, but rather a variety of positions. If these positions fail to converge towards unity, then the two lines struggle occurs.”

Regarding the first objection, it should be noted that the unity of the party is always at risk: in fact we have to fight for party unity. If unity were not at risk, there would be no need to keep fighting for it. Where does the threat to unity come from? Does recognition of two lines colliding compromise the unity or does it favour it? If the issue is stated in these terms, the answer becomes obvious. Threats to the unity of the communist party result from the fact

1. that periodically the party faces a new situation and new tasks,
2. that understanding of things is not immediate or granted (things do not show in themselves, otherwise there would be no need of search and science would not exist) but is the result of the study, the research and the verification,
3. that in today’s society there are different classes with different interests, that modern society faces two ways corresponding to the two fundamental classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat) and that this involves diverging worldviews (ideas and values).

That is why to take note of the thing and to deal with it with cognition of the facts is better than undergoing it and moving blindly.

Moreover, the reality gets on also among the comrades who do not yet have the key for understanding. Treating the experience of the Soviet Union in the Report submitted to Anti-Imperialist Camp on August 15, 2007, a member of MLKP asserts that the formation of a bureaucratic capitalist class [this Trotskyist category is generally accepted by the Communists who have not assimilated the Maoism] (which in 1956, with the Twentieth Congress, took the leadership of the Party and the country) was the result of “the wrong handling of the faults that were made during the socialist democracy from the second half of the 30ies [when the collectivization of all means of production was an essentially accomplished fact]; the destruction of the exploiting classes, the lack of understanding that the elements of the destruction of the exploiting classes, although their organizational relations were destroyed, would continue with their destructive activities and the consideration of the counter revolutionary forces' activities against the proletariat as "criminal" acts made bourgeois elements get into the party and in the superstructure institutions in a hidden way and let them, whenever possible, undertake degenerating steps in theory and practice, etc.” And this in the same time that, once substantially deleted the private ownership of means of production, it became possible to go to a real socialization of the means of production (of the productive forces). Therefore the comrade of MLKP recognizes that the two lines and the two lines struggle exist in reality, though he refuses to admit them in his conception of the party.

The comrades evidently mistake the existence of two lines and the two lines struggle in the party for accepting coexistence fractions or cliques (hidden fractions) in the party. They mistake the existence of two lines and the two lines struggle in the party for the argument of our former liberal friends according to which “there is always a minority,” that we mentioned above. It is different from the two colliding lines arising as we face each new task and each new situation. Peaceful, open ended and institutional coexistence of two incompatible lines is the opposite of the two lines struggle. The first is the stagnation of the party, lines, ideas and groups that paralyze each other, diplomacy and subterfuges, deviations of the party now on the left and now on the right, ideal ground for bourgeoisie’s influence in the party. The second is the life and achievement of unity of the party around the position and according to the line most advanced to fulfil the task of the phase.

Regarding *the second objection*, we too believe that the conception that the two lines struggle is the engine of the development of the party is wrong, as the conception that competition is the engine of development of capital. Engine of the development of the communist party is the role of Staff of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the struggle to build socialism and then to lead the transition to communism. The two lines arise in certain circumstances and their emergence is a sign of the vitality of the party and the struggle between them is the way how the party progresses. “Without contradiction there is no life”, in the sense that a living thing proceeds through contradictions.

Incidentally, neither the competition is engine of the development of capitalism. Engine of the development of capitalism is the increase in value of itself, the pursuit of profit. The competition is nothing else than this internal need of the capital each fraction of the capital has, as the need for progress that has been imposed by other fractions of the capital which are opposed to it and that supplant it if it does not obeys the law of his nature.

Regarding *the third objection*, according to us the argument that in the party, facing new situations or tasks, there is a multiplicity of positions and not two lines, is the argument of those in the knowledge stay on the surface and judge by appearances and in practice fall into solutions or empirical (dictated by current common sense) or eclectic (trying to put together and mix principles and concepts which are incompatible). Certainly when a new situation arises, there is a multiplicity of positions: it corresponds to the approaches partly different in themselves by the single organizations and comrades and related to the different levels of organizations and comrades, to their different level of commitment to the

cause and of ability to orient themselves and to understand. But if we go deep enough in the concrete analysis of the concrete situation and we highlight the relationship between each position and the various aspects of the situation, we come to the conclusion that there are two lines and no more, because there are two ways open in front of us, because there are only two classes that can be the head of the society and direct. “The one divides into two (not into three or into a hundred) is rightly one of the general laws of dialectics.

In discussing the activities of the first Communist International (IC) (*First International Communist activity in Europe and Maoism* in *La Voce*, n. 10), Umberto C. rightly says that the IC European parties adopted in each case solutions eclectic or empirical.

Why should the different positions converge towards unity? How do comrades at the beginning asserting different positions converge towards unity? Experience shows that if you go deep enough in the analysis of positions, then in the struggle between different positions, they change and ultimately become polarized into two lines (corresponding to the two ways and the two classes). Through this struggle the comrades unite around the just line emerging (and often is not any of the initial positions, because each of starting positions often is more or less unilateral, more or less just, etc...) The irreducible ones who oppose the just line must be expelled from the party. The best result is that nobody is expelled as every comrade joins the just line. But this joining by all comrades a common and more advanced position, is not the combination of the multiple starting points: a bit of the one and a bit of the other, combination, tolerance and compromise. A vanguard party, the General Staff of a class that must win the leadership of society, progresses and wins only if it adopts the advanced position.

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