AGAINST THE CAPITALIST CEMENT SEWER: COMMUNIST SPACE AND OXYGEN

A scientific verification

In the first chapter of the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels recount the birth, development and rise of the bourgeoisie on the material basis of the development of trade and the discovery of new shipping routes. It is recorded as early as 1848: *"The bourgeoisie has subjected the countryside to the rule of the city.* ***It has created enormous cities; it has greatly increased the urban population*** *as compared with that of the countryside, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life."* In the contingent immediate revolutionary program of 1848, the Manifesto includes as an immediate measure after the seizure of power the *"Combination of agriculture and industry; measures aimed at gradually eliminating the opposition between town and country."* This point is not only an immediate measure but also is part of the integral revolutionary program. In fact, the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels recognizes the utopian socialists for having placed in the foreground of social transformation the need to eliminate the contrast between town and country.

In 1848, when the Manifesto was written, the most populous city in the world was London, the capital of the model country that Marx used to study and describe the laws that govern the parable of capitalism from its birth to its ineluctable death. This is how Engels described it in 1844: *"A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is <u>something truly very particular</u>. This colossal centralization, <u>this heaping together of 2.5 million human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of these 2.5 million men a hundredfold</u>."* (The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1844).

At that time Marx was told that it was madness to say that the rest of the countries would develop in the same way as England, but in the course of these 180 years it has been possible to see how capitalism has taken root all over the globe, how the "particularity" of London has become universal, and how *"entire populations arising by charm, as if they came out of the earth"* (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848) have proliferated and proliferate on all continents.

In 1952, at the meeting in Forlì, our Party, in full continuity with the Marxist line, set as the point of the immediate revolutionary program the *"«A halt to construction» of houses and workplaces around large cities and even small ones, as a first step toward the even distribution of the population across the countryside. Reduction of congestion, speed and volume of traffic by prohibiting the unnecessary one."*

In 1952 there were 339,867,767 inhabitants in urban conglomerates of more than 100,000 inhabitants, representing 14.13% of the world's population; in 50 years, in 2006 the figure rose to 2,162,591,788 representing 34.13% of the world's population (see The Communist nº48 and 49), in 2025, the figure has increased to about 3,267 million out of a population of about 8,300 million (39.69%). In 2026 only the 100 most populous cities in the world are home to about 1,000 million people: an eighth of the world's population is concentrated in these 100 urban macro concentrations. Tokyo has 37 million inhabitants; Delhi 34.25 million, Shanghai 29.99; Dhaka 23.67; Sao Paulo 22.93; Mexico 22.58; Cairo 22.49; Lagos 16.36... The oldest capitalism, London, 9.69.

These large urban agglomerations impose by their very structure a very high percentage of dispossessed – wage-earners – who have no property or means of production of their own to prevent their accumulation. In them the **law of growing misery is verified**: *"Misery grows and wealth is concentrated, because the absolute and relative number of dispossessed proletarians grows disproportionately, who must eat every day what they have earned that day. Nothing changes in the economic phenomenon if every day the wages of some proletarians, in given professions, in some countries, allow the cut of meat and the cinema, and, supreme luck, the subscription to L'Unità"* (Marxism and Misery, Battaglia Comunista, 1949).

The sewer and capitalist overcrowding

This concentration and agglomeration of the population in the big cities makes them a focus of unhealthiness. In the third volume of Capital, Marx explains the difficulty of the bourgeoisie in processing the waste generated by man's consumption in the big cities: *"The capitalist economy registers an enormous waste of them in the capitalist economy. In London, for instance, they find no better use for the excretion of four and a half million human beings than to contaminate the Thames with it at heavy expense."* (Capital, Volume III, Chapter V section IV). The bourgeoisie of twenty-first century France has had to invest more than 1,400 million euros to make the Seine a river in which (supposedly) bathing no longer causes diseases... The bourgeois "scientific" proof that the waters are not polluted is to bathe one of their parliamentary puppets and show him to the masses: if the parliamentary cretin is still alive, there is no danger!

In the international division of labour, there are cities which have the "honor" of being directly the dumping ground for international waste and garbage. This is the case, for example, with electronic waste sent to Ghana and which ends up concentrated in processing areas in Accra. But everywhere, the lot of the majority of proletarians in the big cities is to live in crowded working-class neighborhoods: *" the confusion has only recently reached its height when every scrap of space left by the old way of building has been filled up and patched over until* ***not a foot of land is left to be further occupied****."* (The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1844).

In these working-class neighborhoods, diseases spread more easily because of the lack of air renewal and because the bourgeoisie does not invest in cleanliness; and the same happens in the subways, buses or trains where the proletariat is crammed in like cattle to go to and from work.

The workers living in basements are not exclusive to the Manchester and Liverpool of 1844 and when there are floods these houses are the first to be flooded. After catastrophes, the bourgeoisie throws its hands to its head and makes restrictions on construction, but *"The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night, are not abolished; they are merely shifted elsewhere! The same economic necessity which produced them in the first place, produces them in the next place also. As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers."* (The Housing Question, Engels, 1872).

Capitalism not only forces its workers to live underground in basements, real mousetraps, but also locks them up hundreds of meters high in tiny confinement cells in macro-buildings of 20, 30, 40 or more floors to make the most of each square meter.

This is how our current described the urban plans of the highly laureate Le Corbusier in 1953: *"The principle of the* ***super-exploitation of space*** *goes as far as these crazy tendencies: to overlap the green of urban gardens (tomorrow also that of wheat and potato fields!), the transit routes and the covered surface of buildings vertically in the same space.* ***Verticalism, is the name of this distorted doctrine; capitalism is verticalist. Communism will be «horizontalist».*** **"** (Space against cement, Il Programma Comunista). This capitalist verticalism has nothing to do with the fact that the globe lacks space, but is the exclusive product of the concentration of capital.

Capital needs a mass of available wage earners to be able to hire at a low price and the mass of wage earners is forced to go where it is most likely to find a buyer for its labor power, that is, where there is more capital. This is the irresistible force that pushes the population to agglomerate in the big cities, which is why these agglomerations that are a source of pollution and unhealthiness are inevitable as long as wage labor and capital subsist.

This gigantic agglomeration of the working class is accompanied by the epileptic traffic that saturates and blocks the big cities. The **anarchy of mercantile production** imposes on the labor force to look for a buyer wherever it finds one, this inevitably produces a multiplication of useless, chaotic, irrational and unplannable displacements. In addition to a waste of time going to and from jobs and an increase in pollution.

The criterion of least cost and the business of disaster

In capitalism, constructions are carried out with the sole objective of satisfying the needs of profit, so only *"With the end of capitalism, this criterion of construction technique that is presented today in schools and centers as eternal truths, will end without honor the criterion that says: to bear the maximum weights and maximum efforts in structures of the minimum weight and above all of the minimum possible cost".* (Politics and Construction, Prometeo, series 2, n.3 and 4, 1952). The number of stations and metro tunnels in large cities that have ended in collapses, potholes, etc. gives us a good example of the criterion of minimum cost. Asbestos was very economical, as well as carcinogenic; but the latter was very well concealed for years by the bourgeoisie in pursuit of the criterion of minimum cost.

Capitalism is not interested in the maintenance of constructions already made, but in the reconstruction that follows disasters and catastrophes: *"The basis of Marxist economic analysis is the distinction between dead labor and living labor. We define* ***capitalism*** *not as ownership over the accumulations of crystallized past labor, but as the* ***right to the subtraction of living and active labor****. That is why the present economy cannot lead to a good solution which carries out, with the minimum effort of present labor, the rational preservation of all that has been handed down to us by past labor, and the best bases for the effect of future labor. The bourgeois economy is interested in the frenzy of modern labor, and it* ***favors the destruction of masses still useful from past labor****, laughing at those who come."* (Homicide of the Dead, Battaglia Comunista, n. 24, 1951).

Revolutionary potentiality

Avoiding the process of urban concentration in capitalism not only impotently clashes with the laws of accumulation, but represents a reactionary illusion. *"The solution lies in the* ***abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labor by the working class itself****."* (The Housing Question, Engels, 1872). And it is the task of these proletarian masses previously piled up in the big cities for the convenience of capital, to dismantle them later as part of the anti-capitalist revolutionary process: *"It is precisely modern large-scale industry, which has turned the worker, formerly chained to the land, into a completely propertyless proletarian, liberated from all traditional fetters, a free outlaw; it is precisely this economic revolution which* ***has created the sole conditions under which the exploitation of the working class in its final form, in the capitalist mode of production, can be overthrown****."* (The Housing Question, Engels, 1872).

Capitalism has also laid the other material premises for overcoming both urban and productive agglomeration: *"With inventions and the enormous increase in the productivity of labor, the coordination of many workers remains, but there is no longer any reason for beastly overcrowding side by side. (…) The very modern forms of production, which use networks of stations of all kinds, such as hydroelectric power stations, communications, radio, television, increasingly give a unique operational discipline to the workers spread out in small groups over enormous distances.*

Combined labor remains, in ever larger and more wonderful interconnections, and autonomous production disappears more and more. But the technological density mentioned above is steadily diminishing. ***The urban and productive agglomeration remains, therefore, not for reasons dependent on the optimum of production, but because of the persistence of the profit economy and the social dictatorship of capital.*** *"* (Space against Cement, Il Programma Comunista, 1953).

The overcoming of the contradiction between city and countryside is engraved as a cardinal point in the integral communist program, the development of which must be initiated as an immediate measure by the revolutionary proletariat by stopping construction and drastically reducing traffic after the overthrow of the bourgeois state: **horizontalism against verticalism; communist oxygen against capitalist sewer; space against cement.** *"When it is possible, after having crushed by force this dictatorship that is becoming more and more obscene every day, to subordinate every solution and every plan to the improvement of the conditions of living labor, transforming for this purpose what is dead labor, constant capital, the infrastructure that the species human has contributed with over the centuries, and continues to contribute with, to the earth's crust, then the brute verticalism of the concrete monsters will be mocked and suppressed, and thanks to the immense horizontal expanses of space, once the gigantic cities have been vacated, the strength and intelligence of the animal man will progressively tend to uniformize in the habitable lands the density of life and the density of labor, already converted into concordant forces and not, as in the present deformed civilization, into ferocious enemies, and held together only by the specter of serfdom and hunger."* (Space against Cement, Il Programma Comunista, 1953).