

Some Basic Knowledge of Marxism*

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Presentation

These are comments made by Chairman Gonzalo on the two introductory paragraphs of the document “On Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” the first of the Fundamental Documents as part of the foundation and taking position in the First Congress of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP). *Necessary comments that imply some basic knowledge of Marxism, especially how it is applied to the reality of the Peruvian revolution as part of the world proletarian revolution.* That is why, on the occasion of celebrating a new anniversary of Chairman Gonzalo’s birth and the Day of the People’s Liberation Army, we are publishing them as an article prepared by us on the basis of the records of the First Congress. The fact is despite such basic and necessary knowledge there is a lot of confusion among the Maoists as a consequence of the action of revisionism and its repercussion in the ranks as a part of the ideological dynamics. Therefore, this article is a brilliant opportunity of celebration and as a part of it serving the struggle to eradicate the confusions in this respect to have more unity for common action.

As for its application to reality, the Chairman himself clarifies: we must bear in mind who the documents are aimed at, we are not in Europe, we are in Peru, one must bear this in mind. The circumstances of a Marx when he had to establish was one, that is why *Capital* has three volumes plus the two on surplus value, five. Marx said through Engels, that it should not be more than five parts, we should not be guided by different publications but what Marx elaborated. Or Lenin’s circumstance, if one thinks about

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the Bolshevik Party, one finds that this Party waged a great moment of ideological struggle, long time carried out among people with a wide Marxist formation, cosmopolitan elements, several of them spoke several languages, and it was an intellectuality that as such debated on that level, that is why we have Lenin's works as they are written. If one compares the texts of Comrade Stalin, they are already much more concrete and if we take the works of Chairman Mao Zedong, they are extremely deep, very simple and very clear and do not go into many ins and outs; but if one follows carefully the exposition of the Chairman in his works, one understands clearly, what he wants to tell us. So one must take into account the concrete conditions in which one operates, not to have them present is wrong.

The document *ON MARXISM-LENINISM-MAOISM* in its first two paragraphs (introduction) tells us literally:

“In the furnace of class struggle, the ideology of the international proletariat emerged [insurgió] as Marxism, afterwards developed into Marxism-Leninism and later Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Therefore, the scientific ideology of the proletariat, all-powerful because it is true, has three stages or landmarks in its dialectical process of development: 1) Marxism, 2) Leninism, and 3) Maoism. These three stages are part of the same unity which began with the Communist Manifesto one hundred and forty years ago, with the heroic epic of the class struggle, in fierce and fruitful two-line struggles within the communist parties themselves and in the titanic work of thought and action that only the working class could generate. Today, three unfading lights are outstanding: Marx, Lenin, and Mao Zedong who, through three grand leaps have armed us with the invincible ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which today is principally Maoism.

Nevertheless, while Marxism-Leninism has obtained an acknowledgment of its universal validity, Maoism is not completely acknowledged as the third stage. Some simply deny its condition as such, while others only accept it as “Mao Zedong Thought.” In essence, both positions, with the obvious differences between them, deny the general development of Marxism made by Chairman Mao Zedong. The denial of the “ism” character of Maoism denies its universal validity and, consequently, its condition as the third, new, and superior stage of the ideology of the interna-

tional proletariat: Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism, that we uphold, defend, and apply.”

We would like to emphasize some points that deserve a small foundation, but we do not intend to make big foundations, not because Marxism does not have them, but because we have to keep in mind who the documents are addressed to.

About the First Paragraph

The Ideology of the International Proletariat

The quotation begins with the first question, which is the “ideology of the international proletariat,” its definition is understood.

Ideology because there are those who speak of science as opposed to Marxist ideology, forgetting that our ideology is scientific. When Engels dealt with the problem of ideology in his famous letters from 1890 to 1895, he told us that all the classes before the proletariat had an inverted reflection of reality. What does this mean? Like the camera, it inverts the figure, what is in the head puts it on the feet and vice versa. In this way, every non-proletarian ideology twists reality, deforms it and therefore cannot understand the essence of reality, cannot understand the truth as it is, cannot grasp the contradiction as it is. Therefore, non-proletarian ideologies are deformations, they are not scientific and the root is one, very concrete: they are based on exploitation. Or, in order to generalise and encompass them all, it is sustained by the private property of the means of production, while the proletariat is not sustained by the property of the means of production or by exploitation, its historical mission is precisely to destroy private property of the means of production in order to sweep away all existing exploitation and differences.

The Ideology of the International Proletariat is Scientific

We must claim the term ideology in the understanding that our ideology is that of the international proletariat and only of this class and no other, is scientific. Yes, it is scientific, but it does not take away its character of ideology. *When one insists on replacing the term ideology with scientific or*

science, one sums into bourgeois criteria, into bourgeois philosophy centred on the theory of knowledge, that is it basically. In the 1960s we have again seen very clearly these concerns in the approaches of the French revisionist Althusser, it is he who has insisted on this problem. But what was the basis of it? He stated that the ideology of the proletariat was not scientific and the essence of his thought, of the thought of this revisionist - we must not forget what he is -, according to him is to foolishly distorting the history of the sciences. Althusser thinks that Marxism, condensed according to his revisionist criteria only into scientific socialism, was a new science that had not been philosophically founded, and that he was going to make that scientific foundation. Thus, he accused Marx of having created scientific socialism as a new science but of not having given it its doctrinal, philosophical foundations, to be precise. That is the basis of that criterion. If one analyses the works of this individual, one finds that he is going to propose that the foundation of Marxism carries a fusion of Spinoza's materialism - Spinoza is a Jewish philosopher expelled from Spain whose family ended up in the Netherlands at that time; Spinoza was a great philosopher in his time and for his time, he was a materialist of the beginnings of the bourgeoisie. Althusser considered that the foundation of Marxism had to be made by fusing Spinozism with Kantism which is another bourgeois philosophy. There you can see his nefarious position. In essence, what does it imply? A re-edition of the theses of the old revisionists, such as Kautsky, who maintained that Marxism had no philosophy and that Marxist philosophy was Kantism; that is to say, it put bourgeois philosophy as the basis of our conception, after all an agnosticism or an inability to understand.

The Ideology of the International Proletariat is the Conception of the Proletariat. It is the Ideology of the Last Class in History, Whose Understanding of the World is Scientific

We need to be clear about the implications of that. See, you take one word and there's a whole background. That's why there is equidistant "ideology of the international proletariat" to express the conception of the proletariat, the last class in history, whose understanding of the world is scientific. That is what we must know in concrete terms. Why the above? So it can be seen that there is a whole foundation in Marx, in Engels, there is a deep understanding,

and so one can see what it means to insist repeatedly on certain terms, believing that they will thus raise Marxism, when at the bottom they are bastard concessions to the bourgeoisie, and this must make us think that we cannot simply repeat all the ideologies that are swarming; first, because it falls into an easy snobbery – it is called snobbery to go after the new, after fashion, a lot of intellectuals do. We, then, have to go to the core of things and grasp the substantive things and have a high critical spirit to judge many or all of the things that are written in the world about our conception. One might ask, *what does conception mean? It is the understanding of everything that exists, that means understanding of the material world, understanding of the class struggle, that is, the social world, and it means understanding of knowledge as a reflection of the matter in the mind which is another form of matter.* That means conception. What have I just done? Putting Marx’s definition of dialectics forward, omitting only the reference to laws.

It is More than 2,500 Years of Knowledge that has been Reworked from the Position and Interests of the International Proletariat

Our ideas of the international proletariat are therefore the product of a very high level of elaboration, they are more than 2,500 years of knowledge that has been reworked from the position and interests of the international proletariat, that is our prosthesis, that is our background: 2,500 years! That is why we always laugh when some cretins and smart alecks say that Marxism has no foundation, that is a frozen thing. They don’t know what they are talking about! That could be repeated by an ignoramus from head to toe. Many things can be written and said, the saying is right: “Paper doesn’t blush” and stupidity is impudent. This is what we face when we talk about the ideology of the international proletariat: the elaboration - I repeat - of more than 2,500 years of Western thought, because in that field it has developed without diminishing its universal validity, and elaborated from the position and interests of the working class, of the proletariat what is its strictest name; strictly speaking it is called proletariat and it is international because it is one class, so we have only one ideology.

What is Insurgency?

The quotation also says: *insurgió*. What is *insurgió*? It is linked to insurgency, isn't it? It is a combatant, revolutionary break, that's what it means. You see, the term is not for pleasure. Sometimes when one reads, one reads very quickly or writes very quickly. So, you have to repair, you have to know how to read and study and think. The brevity of the documents precisely moves the comrades to think, to develop the initiative of understanding in order to be able to transform.

Why is the Ideology of the Proletariat All-Powerful?

In the quotation it is said: "it is all-powerful," of course it is all-powerful because it is true, Lenin's thesis proved to be true.

There are Three Stages of a Dialectical Process of Development of the Ideology of the Proletariat

The three stages. The document says stages, moments or milestones, but one is the more precise term and the one we use: stages; then moments or milestones are equivalent but one is the one that expresses it. In the end, in no language and not in ours either, no term, no word is identical to another, they will have similar contents but not identical.

We make a big statement here that is essential: *there are three stages, first Marxism, second Leninism, third Maoism that is how it is defined*. But notice that it says stages of a dialectical process of development, of course, it is a *dialectical process of development*. Why is it that way? *Because it is a process of knowledge, a reflection in the mind, a reflection of matter in the mind and matter in movement, dialectical, knowledge is so and not by simple method as some say, but by essence*, that is another mania. Methodologism is another concession to bourgeois philosophy. Is it used sometimes? Yes, but never do Marxists oppose and even less do they reduce our conception to a simple methodology. It is a crass error to get entangled in the theory of bourgeois knowledge. None of them, neither Marx, nor Lenin, nor the Chairman did it; if they talk about methods they never refer to reducing all Marxism to a simple methodological question, it would lose its quality of conception: being conception has the method as a component, as a derivation; in the end method is procedure, nothing else. That is why it is important

to have a dialectical process, because in reality itself and its laws correctly grasped through practice, because it is impossible to have knowledge without practice, it could not be; precisely separating theory from practice is another concession to the bourgeoisie, it is a strictly bourgeois thought, in our case of narrow empiricism of the 18th century. These are the things that are at the basis of our criteria as communists.

The Manifesto of the Communist Party of 1848 is the First Milestone on Which the Whole Great Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is Built

The Manifesto is a starting point of the party, it has been 140 years since its appearance. Before there were attempts, precursors, if any; in Marx and Engels' own work we have their participation in the League of Communists, but that league of communists was a jumble of different ideas, it was not a clear expression of the proletariat. It is only with the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which is its full name, that for the first time the communists are putting forward their position and programme and it is the starting point, the milestone or the first stone on which our whole edifice is built, all that is great Marxism-Leninism-Maoism; it is the *Manifesto* that remains a valid flag to communism, not as Khrushchev said: that it had finished its mission with the programme of the CPSU in 1961, taking away our class position and introducing a rotten bourgeois conception, a complete and comprehensive revision of whole Marxism. Therefore, *The Manifesto* is our starting point, the first milestone, milestone because it will last thousands of years and when there is communism it will still be considered as that great beginning that led to the new humanity.

Only the Class Struggle can Generate our Conception, our Ideology

It says that it is a heroic epic of class struggle, of course, only class struggle can generate our conception, our ideology; only the proletariat with its great and incessant transformation of the material reality in their productive practice, or in the class struggle whose centre is politics, as the conquest and defence of the power for the class by overthrowing other powers, only as a practice of research, could the class, generating titans of thought and action,

shape itself as the great ideology that we always hoist and will hoist. What is behind this *titans of thought and action*? It is linked to “*three unfading lights: Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong*,” a chain of mountains not only has big heights, there are also small summits, medium summits but there are very high peaks. Traditionally, it has always stood out and we also recognize the work of Engels; Engels is a founder of Marxism. Moreover, if we go into these things, it was Engels who first established a scheme of understanding the basis of society, the relations of exploitation, that is to say the Political Economy, it was him, as Marx himself recognized. But it was Marx, with the wonderful talent and capacity of action that he had, who shaped the first great height, especially recognised by Engels; it was Engels who proposed that Marx should base the new ideology. It is Engels who has developed more the philosophical part or has treated more the philosophical part of Marxism. Reason: Marx did not have time to do it; he said that he was working to elaborate a Treatise on Dialectics and unfortunately he did not manage to complete it, there we would have had a great work; but in short, comrades, there are things that were more urgent, he did not have time.

We also recognise comrade Stalin. Comrade Stalin has been a great Marxist-Leninist. Did he err? Yes, but he never sold the revolution, he could have made a mistake, he could not understand; as the Chairman has taught, his mistake started from an insufficient understanding of dialectics, from dragging metaphysics, from this derives the problem of comrade Stalin; but nobody can deny his enormous role nor can anybody take away his condition of leader of the international proletariat for decades, facing for the first time the construction of socialism, without precedent, nor the great effort he led in the Second World War. He has contributions, of course he has them, we cannot deny him, we must know how to value them. So there are already five of them, the three added up to five; *but it is a pleiad, a considerable group of great figures, of titans of thought and action*. So, this is enclosed. Why have we not listed them? *To make it clear that there are three great figures: Marx, Lenin, Chairman Mao Zedong*, that is the reason.

And how will our Ideology Develop as a Dialectical Process?

Our ideology will develop as a dialectical process through great leaps; therefore the document says through great leaps and three great, of course, three

great qualitative leaps: Marx, Lenin, Chairman Mao Zedong. But these three great qualitative leaps could not be understood without other big, medium and even small leaps and with these incessant leaps, which we do not consider as such because of their elementary magnitude. That is the fact, that is what this first paragraph implies, all that is its background. It is in this way that a great dialectical process, then, generated by the proletariat producing men that only the class can produce, that we have arrived at Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, principally Maoism. This is how it should be seen. What are we demonstrating once more? There is a whole background of foundation.

About the Second Paragraph

Not Recognizing “ism,” not Recognizing “Maoism”

Marxism-Leninism is recognised as having universal validity but that Maoism is not fully recognised as the third stage. It is clearly said: some simply deny its condition as such, i.e. third stage; others only come to Mao-Zedong-Thought. In essence, what is behind these two positions that are within the proletariat, that are within Marxism? We are not talking about reaction, what is there within the Marxists today, even Marxist-Leninists, what is there? In essence, not recognising “ism,” not recognising “Maoism.” The “ism” has a clear meaning; “thought” is nothing but a set of ideas, nothing else, while “ism” is *a doctrine that interprets all the matter in its different ways of expression, which are the three above mentioned: nature, society, knowledge* and stop counting, there is nothing else.

It is a Doctrine, Not a System

I said “doctrine.” I stress, I did not say “system.” If you say “system,” you would be making a big mistake. Engels has already expressly analysed this point, but some people who use “system” make a grave error, the correct thing to say is “doctrine,” understanding it as we have just specified it. The innovative mania, is it good? No, it goes against the unique language and there are things that are established in a party way, to have a unique language, that expresses therefore a party maturity, its own language; the rest, the people already express themselves according to the social conformation and the development that each one has, on that we could not enter

any more. Do you understand? We cannot enter, they are already the peculiarities of each person. But we have to serve to establish a unique language, let's leave aside the superfluous manias of originality, because at the end of the day originality is not expressed in terms, it is expressed in discovering new realities, small, medium or large. Is that clear? The originality, that is useless, undermines the unique language and therefore the consolidation, the unification. What did many foreigners and even many comrades of the Chinese comrades say? They said, it is enough to listen to one Chinese person to listen to all Chinese people. What did they want? Each Chinese to have his or her own line? False originality, that is not originality; originality is the discovery of new things, not the use of terminology, less snobbery, we must guard against snobbery and the intelligentsia is a source of snobbery, of terminology that confuses the language, confuses our unified understanding, apart from the fact that they miserably destroy the language that we speak which is an element in the shaping of the nation. Marxism is not a problem of fashions; there is no room for these useless fumes.

Later on, when Chairman Gonzalo refers to the content of Maoism, in 1. Theory... The three integral parts, he will deal with why we should say doctrine and not system, and he says so:

Marxist philosophy is the basis of our conception, it is the core of ideology, of course, that is why we cannot neglect it. Lenin drew the great lesson, when he said: "For a time I thought that philosophy was a question of the specialists of the Party in this problem, but the struggle made me understand that philosophy cannot be left in the hands of the specialists because philosophy is the very basis of the Party." And you cannot fight against revisionism if you don't grasp Marxist philosophy, and Marxist philosophy cannot be split into dialectical materialism on one hand and materialism applied to the social world. No comrades, this is a big mistake! Although it was Marx who solved the problem of understanding the social world, he did it by applying dialectical materialism; therefore, it is nothing but the dialectical materialist understanding of society, nothing else, however new it may be. It is a radically new and different creation, so what is new and different is not only the application to the social world. Why do I say this: the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century through Diderot – that French character - developed mechanistic materialism to its highest level and came to intuit the contradiction, to sense it, but never to understand it. Materialism is very old, comrades, as well as dialectics, are parallel, contemporary in origin, have more than 2550 years in the West, we owe it to the Greeks. But it has

been Marx who took the idea as a derivation of matter, fusing dialectics with matter, who gave the great transformation generating the new philosophy, the exhaustive and complete philosophy not in a closed sense, that is why we cannot talk about system, system implies closed circle and knowledge is spiral, everybody remembers what a spiral is, it is not a closed circle and neither the circles that form the spiral are closed, it is not true that, they are not.

So it is The Essential Point, it is the “ism”

We are told, for example, what is the difference between Mao-Zedong-Thought and Maoism? If the same truths are held or defended, why fight for that term? It is not simply a problem of the term; what is at stake is whether it has universal validity or not, and if it is “ism” then it has it, and if it is not “ism” then it does not. That is the problem, so it is not a problem of term, isn’t it? Well, if things were like that it would be identical, why don’t we say then “the international ideology of the proletariat: Marx-Thought-Lenin-Thought-Mao-Zedong-Thought,” why don’t we say that if it is identical, it would be logical. Then, why should we use Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Zedong-Thought, if it is the same let’s say Marx-Lenin-Mao-Zedong-Thought. Would it be correct, deeply absurd, it would be to deny its universal character. What is the aim? To deny the universality of Chairman Mao Zedong’s development, that’s it. That is why we say these two positions are basically against the same, in essence; with differences, of course they have them because one thing is only to reach to Marxism-Leninism and another thing the RCP reached to the previous more Mao-Zedong-Thought (to later adopt the term Maoism and pass soon after to deny everything; note of the editors); but in essence it is the same and here what interests us are the substantive questions, the essential.

As for the introduction. As comrades know well, this document is based on what the Central Committee aired in 1982 and 1984 in a general way, complete, the whole problem means and specifically aired in many occasions in the party. From the beginning we have used an introduction taking two questions: an accurate thesis of the great Lenin and a great defence of Leninism made by comrade Stalin. That is why Stalin cannot be denied or condemned to hell. Because the fact that he said that we were entering Leninism and defended it as he did and imposed it on the world, is enough merit, or do you think it was not enough?

We have taken these two issues. Here what deserves explanation is that Lenin said: as the revolution goes into the East it expresses specific conditions. These are not strictly the words of the Great Lenin but this is his idea. He was telling us: the revolution in Russia expresses peculiarities, apart from the fact that it takes place in a very specific situation: the First World War, the final part of it, the defeat of the tsarism in the hands of Germany, the unsatisfied needs of the peasant who was asking for land in a country that, although it was a prison of people because it had reached imperialism, had a wide feudal base that Lenin masterfully synthesizes by saying “land concentrated in very few hands and a huge mass with few or no lands,” without going into figures that he handles extraordinarily. In this way he tells us: the revolution in Russia does not deny the truth established by Marx as the law of the revolution. He does not deny, what he is doing is simply seeing the peculiarities, the specifics; and he says the revolution as it goes into the East shows that peculiarity, whether we like it or not, that is so. The incomprehension of the European social democracy, of the European opportunists, mercenary writers of the European reactionaries, condemned that revolution, they even called it, being reactionary, not Marxist. Brave defenders of Marxism! What did they say, then, about that revolution: it is an eastern despotism, as it has always been seen in the East, and with that, they had already solved the problem; they said: a mass of ignorant people, how can they make a socialist revolution? Thus they said, abounding in their “arguments.” How did the Great Lenin respond: “In which text is it that we must first educate before conquering power for the class, before establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which document is it? Is it expressly forbidden in Marx or Engels that one should conquer power and then educate? There is no such prohibition, so what is the cry about?” This is how he puts it. What happens is that those who are burdened by bourgeois liberalism do not understand what is new and how it is expressed, because if we are going to talk about it, what proletarian revolution have they made? The Europeans are clucking a lot, the imperialist countries or the so-called advanced countries are clucking a lot, and they say that the mistake of the revolution is that it has taken place in backward peripheral areas such as Russia and China. Well, where has the proletarian revolution been made in the West, when has it been made, why has it not been made, if they are so enlightened, because enlightened they are, we have to admit, they are, but it is not enough to make the revolution. The Great Lenin, going deeper into this, what he was telling us: wait, you will see the revolution in the East

and when you see it, your surprise will be huge, immense, you will fall back! - using our turn, that is: you are going to fall backwards! - Didn't he say that? Moreover, to the comrades from the East, whom he gathered, what did Lenin put forward: we, he said, including him, know the revolution in the capitalist countries but not in the backward countries under imperialist domination; that is your task, it is pending, you have to solve it without forgetting that you are communists and that you must organise as such, as a Party, linked to the Communist International. Were not these his words?

Why should this question be highlighted? Because it is obvious that the Chinese revolution that has been generated by Chairman Mao Zedong, through the proletariat itself, is taking place in the East, or is it not the East? Is what Lenin said fulfilled or not? Of course it is fulfilled! And from there, then, what is implied? That the same thing that happened to Lenin is happening to the Chairman: The usual cry of the "deep" connoisseurs of Marxism, of the intellectuals who are burdened with bourgeoisie and parliamentary cretinism, of the feathered ones of reaction, that is.

As for comrade Stalin, what was his work that interests us in this point? In Russia itself it was said: Leninism is true, but for Russia, because the core, the fundamental thing is the role of the peasantry. Comrade Stalin, clearly then, says: Consequently, it is not the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, Lenin only rules in Russia and it is not universal, Leninism is specifically Russian, and it is an infamy to say it, because Lenin was precisely the one who has emphasized the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat, he was. You will say, but Marx already raised. *In Marxism, any elementary history of it shows you, the great truths have to be reiterated from time to time because they are forgotten, dusted or simply invoked; just as the great characters of history, Lenin said, are made icons.* An icon here in Peru is Mariátegui: incense is poured on him, nothing else. It was a hard fight in Russia, particularly against Zinoviev.

From this, we derive: "Today, Maoism is facing similar situations and as always the new and Marxism have made their way through struggle, Maoism will also impose itself and be recognised." As the Chairman said: "Marxism has never taken a step in life but in the middle of struggle, it will never take a step." And a great qualitative leap, great as he has given, a new stage, will it be easily accepted? No, it has to be resisted, denied, questioned, interrogated, but behind all these interrogations there are positions of denial, reduction, minimization or whatever, but it is, that is what is interesting. Comrades, Marxism gives us weapons! They have had the sagacity to arm us for the

future and to answer questions, questions that are asked and will be asked in the future; they have armed us. That is the reason of the introduction, it has a meaning.