

Internationalism

Alfredo M. Bonanno

May 1988

The struggle alongside the exploited of the world cannot simply be reduced to collecting signatures or to counter-information it must complete itself with an attack against those responsible – internal and external – for exploitation.

A restricted view of the struggle is doomed to failure. If not in terms of immediate results (improved conditions, growth of revolutionary consciousness, development of the movement, etc) at least in the long term modifying of power relations.

The revolutionary struggle is total. It involves the possibility of life for the exploited in all the different parts of the world, hence the need for the total intervention of the revolutionary even when operating in a circumscribed and therefore immediate struggle.

But this interest cannot limit itself to simply reading the newspapers and keeping oneself informed on what is happening in the world. It must go a little (or a lot) further than that.

Proletarian internationalism is an active intervention, a participation in the struggles of the exploited that extends everywhere.

But there is a mistaken way of considering this basic revolutionary perspective. It was applied by the authoritarian parts of the movement in the seventies with disastrous results. This mistake has mechanical characteristics and consists of taking what one considers to be the highest point of the clash (i.e. the situation of peoples in the third world) where social and economic conflicts are more obvious, and carrying them – as a strategic and methodological proposal – to within the situation of the more advanced countries (the so-called metropolitan situations). In the past one heard of bringing Vietnam to Berlin or London or Milan. The mistake was in sanctifying the open armed clash unreservedly and in transferring these aspects to situations which had, and still have very different characteristics.

But in practice it was not a question of real proletarian internationalism. The far-off situation was seen as an occasion for pushing the local situation. The transferal en bloc of the methods and slogans was done with a view to obtaining sympathy and propaganda on the wave of results that the struggle of those far-off peoples were achieving.

We consider that today more than ever real proletarian internationalism can go towards one of two solutions. Firstly, the classical one which is spoken about less and less now and has come

to be seen only through the distorting lens of a now out-dated romanticism, is that of direct participation through internationalist groups or brigades. A lot could be said on the subject which we shall put off until some future date where it can be gone into in more detail among comrades.

Alternatively there is the other aspect, that of real “support” to the internationalist struggle.

It should be said that this support cannot be reduced to a simple subscription. Even if very useful, it is certainly not the first thing that the exploited engaged in a struggle expect. There is also the so-called “political” support, i.e. counterinformation, demonstrations, picketing of consulates and embassies, letters of protest. All very useful things.

And then there is the attack against those responsible for exploitation. Both internally and externally. Without wanting to give this aspect privilege over all the others, we must say — very clearly that to do only the first means rendering such activity ineffective. It means reducing the manifestation of thought and opinion to a banal exercise of democratic dissent. It means the transformation of financial support into an act of charity which is mainly an alibi for oneself. To do the two things together has a more serious significance and corresponds to what we consider to be true proletarian internationalism.

a.m.b.

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