

Diogenes's Invectives

My Political Education

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We had been discussing for a good six hours. He was not listening to what I was telling him. I didn't understand his remarks at all. It was delightful.

Going into the seventh hour, I seemed to get the idea that my interlocutor was trying to mobilize me in the struggle against the class enemy.

“Comrade, I said (for such was our terminology), your point is well made. Right now, I am a little short of enemies. Death to the class enemy! But what is my class exactly?”

— You are poor, you have only your hands to work with. Your class is therefore the working class, and your class enemy is the exploiter of your work.”

I reflected. Here were a few words which arose my suspicion: work, working class. Furthermore, supposing that the word “work” applied to my activity, it wasn't my hands at all that worked.

“Oh! oh! he exclaimed, eyeing me with suspicion. Have I been fooled? Are you not yourself a parasitic exploiter? And how did you manage to cut out physical labor while being a slave?”

“I carefully studied the given work and found three or four methods of doing as much while tiring less. My mates immediately begged me to withdraw into the shade, rest, drink something cool and continue to meditate.

“But your exploiter? How did you deal with your exploiter?”

— With much courtesy. A certain Xeniad. A very rich and avaricious man. He was robbed, justly so if you ask me. I showed him three or four other methods permitting him to become wealthier while freeing his slaves, by giving them his riches as presents before they were stolen from him.”

So I was puzzled and I didn't hide this from my companion.

“Your case is clear, Comrade: you have no class consciousness at all; your political education is non-existent.

— Absolutely, I confirmed. But I only ask to be taught. Where do I start?”

— With your conscience of being exploited. You are poor; you have nothing, therefore you are exploited by those who have everything. First point: be conscious of that.”

I reflected on this first point, and declared that I was conscious of it.

“Very well, said my teacher. Let's get on to the second point: the struggle against your exploiter. You have to take up arms and destroy him.

— Hey, take it easy! And if I destroy him, who will exploit me then?

— Precisely. No one! You will never fatten an exploiter again!

— First of all, if he fattens, too bad! It's his problem. My only business is his arteries. But, above all, if there is no one left to do the exploiting, who is going to take care of all those riches?

— The people! You! Those riches, they're yours; they will be returned to you!”

I was really beginning to worry.

“I, encumbered with all that? No, that won't do!”

The comrade rolled his eyes upward and sighed.

“Listen. There are countries where all the exploiters have been suppressed; their usurped goods have been restituted to the State, that is, to the people, which the State represents. That's better, isn't it?”

I understood (I understand quickly) that we were talking of socialist countries. I nodded enthusiastically.

“Oh, and how! I understand. We agree! I hear that in those countries everyone is poor. That is, almost, because perfection is not a worldly thing. There is no more than a very small minority of fat people, threatened by thrombosis and encumbered with worthless goods. I've even read that in Russia there is supposed to be thirty times more handling personnel than in the United States. Handling, my dream! To be seated in a warehouse watching imbeciles tiring themselves loading and unloading nonsense manufactured by other imbeciles! There you have the true philosopher's life. Do you think, Comrade, that if I destroy the class enemy, I can postulate a handling position? I also hear that they prevent people from thinking freely; there again, why shouldn't I be agreeable? If people are allowed to think as they like, what will they think about? Nothing. For just observe what happens. The interdiction to think is the only stimulant to thought that has ever been proven: look at Rabelais, Cervantes, Voltaire, Dostoevski, Solzhenitsyn.”

My comrade eyed I don't know what in the distance.

“Yes, your system is excellent. But why do you preach it so badly? You have to explain things clearly if you want to make them understood. To our forefathers, who were obsessed by the bourgeois desire to become rich, Lenin was right to promise public urinals of solid gold. But that time is gone. Look at our youth: they prefer a corner of nature. To own does not interest them anymore. They prefer to be. Sell them poverty and idealism, that's what they expect.”

Diogenes.