

IV.2 REGIONAL MATERIALS AND STUDIES

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An Interpretation on the Class Condition of the Communist Party of Argentina in its Formative Process, 1914-1920

Abstract: As part of a relatively new research field, the origins of Argentinean communism were tackled by the historiographical production in an eminently uncritical way. The attention of the scholars in this regard focused mainly on the reconstruction of those facts raised around the First World War that conduced to the definitive fracture of the Socialist Party of Argentina and the emergence of the International Socialist Party (future Communist Party of Argentina). In this sense, the irruption of the communism into the Argentinean political system does not receive the necessary attention in its own specificities. On the contrary, the generalization of the hypothesis prevailed, which explains that in the implicated period the inexistence of any attempt to set up a political party with a class nature. The aim of this article is to provide an interpretative view of the formative process of the PC in Argentina. The frictions that occurred within the Argentinean socialist movement, its development in time and its implications for the party's complex internal dynamics constitute the most important raw material at the moment in order to contribute to the discussion on the class or non-class character of the Communist Party of Argentina.

Since the return of democracy in 1983 allowed researchers to openly and systematically study the historical origins of the Communist Party of Argentina (PC) – the first in the American continent –, the results dealt almost unanimously with generalities marked by a preference towards description. Besides the repression coerced by the last military government in Argentina (1976-1983), Peronism (the first presidency of Juan Domingo Perón began in 1946) and its influence on social sciences was somehow directly responsible for the remarkable ignorance in which Argentinean communism fell once it had contributed to consume its incidence on society. This situation started to revert itself especially in the last decade with the appearance of a series of theories oriented to explain punctually some of the specific characteristics of the PC's intervention concerning the country's social and political aspects. However, the formative stage of this party continues to remain in the dark, lacking an attempt of analysis oriented towards a critical understanding (beyond the facts). Research on the magnitude of the consequences of the international conflict during the years 1914-1918 on Argentina did not take into account the transcendence of this momentous event of Argentinean socialism at the time when the foundations for proto-communism in the region were being set. The heated debate that appeared in this context in 1917 in the core of the Socialist Party of Argentina (PS) proved to be unable to penetrate into a wider sphere of discussion (to transcend it), which is why researchers generally dismiss it in their theoretical

appreciations.¹ For this reason, the purpose of this article is to contribute to the methodical interpretation by regarding the facts that surrounded the history of communism in the Argentinean political system.

The genesis of communism in Argentina, like in most of the countries where its outburst was consolidated by World War I and the October Revolution, is undoubtedly to be found in the irreconcilable differences that appeared in various degrees of strength and maturity within the distinct national socialist parties. With the aim to interpret the structural stabilization of revolutionary Marxism and its breakaway from parliamentary socialism, I will endeavour to track the differences between *faction* and *tendency* within the PS. This is the only way to consider in all its magnitude the endogenous process of development that made it possible for an internationalist minority which vindicated a radical change from the established order. This complex faction led to a turning point for Argentinean socialism at the end of April 1917. From January of the following year on this faction will be described as creating a new political party: the International Socialist Party (PSI), later renamed to Communist Party of Argentina.

Lastly, as a corollary of the problem described, it will be possible to establish how Argentine communism entered the political and institutional scene with electoral reach. This will enable the reader to question the widely spread hypothesis of previous and more recent studies insisting to point out that, due to the 1912 electoral reform, political parties could not “build a class representation of the Argentinean society, not only because the society itself was reluctant, but also because no political party did attempt this seriously”.² Consequently, I will attempt to demonstrate the extent to which the PC constituted a party *of* and *for* the Argentinean working class in its beginning.

I

Since August Bebel's and Wilhelm Liebknecht's involvement in the Reichstag enabled the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) to reject strongly the German war against France in the 1870's, Marx and Engels started considering the benefit of integrating working class claims in the bourgeois parliament more seriously.³ The adopted methodology by the national socialist parties, which should take a leading role in the future strategy design, also created frictions inside each party. The cases in which the differences became irreparable were not few. The common outcome under such circumstances was a breaking-off that resulted in new party organizations. A serious difficulty arises: how to analyse the essential political practices of a given left group whose action and discussion axis has been divided by the antinomy *revolution – reform*.

In an important study about the development of political parties during the spreading of an extended representative democracy in Argentina, Waldo Ansaldi argues that due to the rise of aspiration for individual advancement over class consciousness, there was no

¹ Alfredo Pucciarelli and María Cristina Tortti are very clear in this respect: La construcción de la hegemonía compartida: el enfrentamiento entre neutralistas, rupturistas e yrigoyenistas. In: Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo R. Pucciarelli, José C. Villarruel (eds.): Representaciones inconclusas: las clases, los actores y los discursos de la memoria: 1912-1946, Buenos Aires, Biblos, 1995, pp. 71-123, here: p. 92.

² Luciano de Privitellio: Partidos políticos. In: Historiapolitica.com, URL: <<http://historiapolitica.com/datos/biblioteca/privitelio.pdf>>, pp. 1-8, here: p. 6 [Last consulted: 17.10.2009] [First published in Francis Korn y Miguel de Asúa (eds.): Investigación Social. Errores eruditos y otras consideraciones, Buenos Aires, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Buenos Aires, 2004] (Author's translation).

³ Monthly Johnstone: Marx y Engels y el concepto de partido. In: Umberto Cerroni, Lucio Magri, Monty Johnstone: Teoría marxista del partido político/1, México D.F., Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente, N° 7, 1984, pp. 67-91, here: p. 79.

consciousness of class in the parties before the 1930's.⁴ Ansaldi has been able to recover a document where it is pointed out that by the end of the 1920's the Radical Civic Union (UCR)⁵ became a class party "in terms of the groups that supported it".⁶ We do not adhere to class identification reflected in suffrage,⁷ but to class identification reflected in the party's organic composition and the nature of its claims. Though not unanimously, the PS captured the working class vote during the first decade of elections in Buenos Aires.⁸ It is proposed here to define the character of a working class party not on the basis of the social actors that constituted its electoral roll, but on the basis of its social composition and ideology. Hobart Spalding argues that the character of a party can be recognised by analysing its leaders and the support of its active groups, what may be interpreted in terms of affiliation, going beyond elections.⁹ This approach can also be used to study the birth of communism in Argentina. The theoretical efforts and practical activities carried out by the leaders of international socialism, as well as the support received from revolutionary Marxists, young people and syndicalists are of extreme importance to interpret the class path taken by Argentine communism at its origin, i.e. the moment when it ceased to be a *tendency* to become a *faction* with autonomy from the official majority of the main party.¹⁰

II

Until the appearance of modern parties, the predominant types had always been the notable parties, characterised by their structural weakness, and their oligarchic principles and interventions.¹¹ The PS and the UCR broke with the unstable political model of organization valid in Argentina until the beginning of 1890. With this new configuration of the Argentinean political system the antagonistic ideologies, which were not originally based on personal relations, showed characteristics of modern political parties. The fact that opposing sectors started the struggle for the pragmatic contents of the shared doctrine was the trigger for intraparty frictions. The appearance of dissident groups within the PS in the years before communism attested this new situation.

Power and decision-making within socialism became more important as the party grew in number of members and social impact, which led to a dominance of the sector within the party promoting a parliamentary system. The outbreak of World War I amplified the effects of this process until it reached its peak. Before the war, socialism did not constitute a rigid and

⁴ Waldo Ansaldi: Un caso de nomenclaturas equivocadas? Los partidos políticos después de la ley Sáenz Peña, 1916-1930. In: Waldo Ansaldi, Alfredo R. Pucciarelli José C. Villarruel (eds.): Argentina en la paz de dos guerras. 1914-1945, Buenos Aires, Biblos, 1993, pp 19-63.

⁵ Party in government in Argentina from 1916 to 1930.

⁶ Darío Cantón y José Luis Moreno (1967): La experiencia radical (1916-1930). In: Darío Cantón, José Luis Moreno y Alberto Ciria: La democracia constitucional y su crisis, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2005, pp. 11-113, here: p. 113. (Author's traduction)

⁷ Cf. Sergio Berensztein: Un partido para la Argentina moderna. Organización e identidad del Partido Socialista (1896-1916), Documento CEDES, 60, Buenos Aires, 1991, pp. 1-62. Aníbal Viguera: Participación electoral y prácticas políticas de los sectores populares en Buenos Aires, 1912-1922. In: *Entrepasados*, año 1, N° 1, 1991, pp. 5-33.

⁸ Cf. Darío Cantón y Jorge Raúl Jorrot: Elecciones en la ciudad 1892-2001, Vol. II (1912-1973), Instituto Histórico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, 2001, pp. 211-227; Juan Carlos Torre: ¿Por qué no existió un fuerte movimiento obrero socialista en la Argentina?. In: Claudia Hilb (comp.): El político y el científico: ensayos en homenaje a Juan Carlos Portantiero, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2009, pp. 33-49, here: p. 44.

⁹ Hobart Spalding: La clase trabajadora argentina. Documentos para su historia. 1890/1912, Buenos Aires, Galerna, 1970, p. 61.

¹⁰ A tendency is an indicator for the presence of "diffuse subunits as opposed to the more defined and visible" in the parties, whereas faction is a "specific group with power". Giovanni Sartori [1976]: Partidos y sistemas de partidos, Madrid, Alianza, 1992, p. 100.

¹¹ Cf. Pablo Oñate: Los partidos políticos. In: Rafael del Águila (ed.): Manual de ciencia política, Madrid, Trotta, 2005, pp. 251-270, here: pp. 256-257.

closed structure, but admitted relatively radical practices that could coexist with evolutionary tendencies without any problem.¹² Two political trends coexisted at the beginning in the core of the PS, signs of this coexistence can be identified. Even though revolutionary socialism had left an important imprint in the party's 1st Congress which took place on 28 June 1896,¹³ a moderate socialism represented by Juan B. Justo turned to be predominant two years later. The way to consolidate the socialist group that favoured parliamentary action was thus paved: before becoming an established political party, by the reform of the statutes passed by the 2nd Congress, the PS decided that the aspiring members to the executive committee should hold political offices.¹⁴ This meant leaving the left group, which originally gathered around the German Socialist Club *Vorwärts* led by Germán Ave Lallemand, one of the founders of the PS, out of the leadership.

The debate between adherents of revolution and reform started losing ground until it vanished in 1898 with the most left-oriented group called the *Marxists of the 90's*, who now occupied a role of inorganic opposition within the party. However, since the beginning of the 1910 decade the revolutionary wing, which had incorporated new militants, would reclaim a place in the party through the Socialist Youth (JS). The formation of the Centro de Estudios Sociales Carlos Marx and the issueing in July 1912 of the first number of its newspaper *Palabra Socialista*, the emergence of a revolutionary trend which incorporated the most radical aspects of socialism – all this shows the existence of intraparty tendencies, i.e. the appearance of contrasting positions within socialism. This can be considered a characteristic phenomenon of the period. The JS opposed the parliamentary politics of the majority, claiming for the reestablishment of a threefold activism taking politics from its pedestal to level it with cooperativism and especially with syndicalism.¹⁵ It is important to highlight the methods with which this school of thought, promoting revolutionary Marxist guidelines, attempted to provide the future PC leadership. After having decided to break with the Second International at the 2nd Congress in May 1919, an official document was sent to all socialist member parties explaining the reasons for the creation of a new party structure.¹⁶ This document reproduced some fragments published as a declaration of principles in the first issue of *Palabra Socialista*.¹⁷

If this tendency of internal confrontation was not in itself enough to produce a break off, it is, in our opinion, because the parliamentary sector took advantage of its expansion, blocking the way to create genuine rivalry. However, the socialist alternative to elections found a new way out, crystallising in the Union Propaganda Committee (Comite de Propaganda Gremial) – a fact that left an important imprint within the working class movement of the time. This faction became particularly strong once the events generated by the First World War made an impact on Argentina, compelling it to decide between intervention and neutralism, while the success of the Bolshevik revolution and the ending of Russia's involvement in the European war fostered the positions of revolutionary internationalism.

¹² Alberto Plá: Orígenes del Partido Socialista Argentino (1896-1918). In: *Cuadernos del Sur*, N° 4, Buenos Aires, Ed. Tierra del Fuego, Marzo-Mayo de 1986, pp. 41-74, here: p. 54

¹³ At the first session of the Party Congress the adherence to scientific materialism as a guarantee of the revolutionary character of the undertaking was made explicit. See: *La Vanguardia* (LV), año III, N° 27, 4.7.1896, p. 1.

¹⁴ Cf. item 7 referring to the organization and item 27 to National Executive Committee matters, in *ibid.*, V, 34, 20.8.1898, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Palabra Socialista*, I, 3, 15.8.1912, p. 3

¹⁶ Lazar Jelfets: Misia Villiamsa i rozhdenie "penelonizma", Sankt Peterburg, Nauka, 2005, p. 12.

¹⁷ Historia del socialismo marxista en Argentina. Origen del Partido Socialista Internacional, redactado por el Partido Socialista Internacional, Buenos Aires, s.e., 1919.

In April 1906 at the 7th PS Congress the decision was made that the revolutionary syndicalists leave the party creating an autonomous organization. At the 6th Congress on July 2 to 3, 1904, the party had approved strikes as a method to obtain economic improvements, declaring it impossible to call for them with a revolutionary aim.¹⁸ Nonetheless, these theses quickly refuted. During its almost two year life, the Union Propaganda Committee (CPG) proved to be very efficient at organizing workers into unions. It managed to gather thousands of them to fight for claims that typically belonged to the working class.¹⁹ This made the founders of the committee think that class consciousness originating from their own experience constituted a fundamental piece for the transition towards socialism. Nevertheless, the circle around Juan B. Justo, the strongest representative of parliamentary socialism, was firm in the stand that union action should be kept apart from party life even though it could be necessary for the completion of the workers' objectives; the party's instrument to exercise power, however, were the elections. Despite being complementary in their objective, the political and economic struggles were separate within the framework of everyday actions. For this reason, the dissolution of the CPG was just a matter of time, and finally took place in 1917. It is argued here that the electoral triumphs obtained by the parliamentary sector in Buenos Aires – reflected in the acquisition of ten seats in the national elections of 1914 – is what enables the PS leaders to gain enough ground to enlarge their activities and to detach themselves from an emerging pro-union faction.

In this context the CPG represented the crystallization of the opposition movement, originated by youth and union movements in an attempt to strengthen the ties between the economic and the political struggles through the merging of the unions with the political party. When the syndicalist Argentine Regional Workers' Confederation (CORA) and a faction of the anarchist Argentine Regional Workers' Federation (FORA) – two of the biggest working class unions in the country – negotiated their fusion in April 1915, the socialist leadership supported this, assuming that apolitical principles would prevail in the new formation.²⁰ Parliamentary socialism allowed and promoted an in-depth management of the issues between Marxist socialists and revolutionary syndicalists, leaving no less than the party organ at the disposal of the latter.²¹ At this point, the socialist leadership preferred to support syndicalists and anarchists rather than to get into dialogue with the radical Marxists. The destruction of the CPG in the hands of the Executive Committee (EC) of the PS completed the triumph of parliamentarism. The latter, in turn, would soon have to confront a new challenge in its consideration of party life.

III

The left wing of the PS was well acquainted with the debates that were taking place in Europe during the Great War. The young members of the party supported the declarations of the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences which advanced internationalism in favour of revolutionary Marxism, and a dissociation from the inter-imperialist war. The newspaper *¡Adelante!* was founded in April 1916 with this aim, at the same time provoking the opposition

¹⁸ *La Vanguardia*, XI, 27, 2.7.1904, p. 2; Jacinto Oddone: *Historia del socialismo argentino*, Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1983, vol. 2, p. 176.

¹⁹ The qualitative and quantitative success of the CPG was publicised by PSI-PC's central organ *La Internacional*, I, 6, 27.10.1917, p. 11.

²⁰ Rubens Iscaro: *Historia del movimiento sindical*, Buenos Aires, Fundamentos, 1973, vol. 2, p. 166.

²¹ Hernán Camarero y Alejandro Schneider: *La polémica Penelón-Marotta (marxismo y sindicalismo soreliano, 1912-1918)*, Buenos Aires, Centro Editor de América Latina, p. 58.

of the socialist leadership.²² The youth was headed by Juan Ferlini, who would become one of the founding members of the PSI few years later. He would have to collaborate with the union leader José Penelón in order to build a revolutionary socialism making an impact on both the economic and political spheres.²³ The PC had its roots in the PS; the non-conformists of the latter would be the protagonists in the foundation of the former. This change of scenery in Argentinean politics was triggered by the context created by the international war.

The submarine warfare declared by Germany produced dramatic changes in the neutral position unanimously adopted until then by the PS. The integrity of transatlantic commerce was endangered, and the party leadership made an uncompromising defense of free trade. This situation increased the parliamentarists' claims for an unrestricted growth in the international circulation of goods. The PS's 3rd extraordinary Congress, carried out on April 28 and 29, 1917, became the arena where the opposing directions converged for the last time as members of the same political organization. Against all odds, the internationalists succeeded in making their opinions on the war prevail. The parliamentarists disregarded the results and threatened to remove their representatives from the National Congress. As a response, the internationalists created a Defence Committee for the Resolutions of the 3rd Congress in November 1917 with the aim of aiding the members willing to abandon the party that had threatened the overt will of the majority of its members. A new Congress was appointed for the 5 and 6 January, 1918, where the Partido Socialista Internacional (PSI) was founded, which was later be renamed Partido Comunista de Argentina.

Defeating parliamentarist socialism in a party Congress for the first and only time in the internal history of the PS was the fact that enabled the group of self-denominated Marxists to acquire "a wider ground to found the new Party".²⁴ The early support of the Russian Revolution helped from the very beginning to increase its determination and to raise its popularity. With the Declaration of Principles, the internationalists carried out a course of action originated by the revolutionary wing that belonged to the Central-European group of the Second International. In accordance with the statements made by the Zimmerwald left, the founders of the PSI realised the impossibility of attempting any kind of communion between nationalism and internationalism. This entailed a detachment from the *Rights of Nations to Self-Determination* promoted by Lenin. We argue here that the key to the role taken by the Argentinean communists in this first stage is that the PSI, even if not explicitly, felt attached to the ideologies outlined by the Club *Vorwärts*, close to the centrism represented by Karl Kautsky in the SPD.²⁵ Thus, Argentinean communism was born both anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist. Nevertheless, it was not particularly anti-nationalist since the logic of its activities was defined by the objective structural conditions of the country, at least until Penelón was expelled during the internal crisis of 1927-1928 and the Moscow-aligned leadership was consolidated and represented by Victorio Codovilla and Rodolfo Ghioldi, who designed a communist profile of the party "oriented outwards".²⁶ During its first years the PC kept to the most important programmatic guidelines of the PS, which can be

²² Comisión del Comité Central del Partido Comunista: Esbozo de Historia del Partido Comunista de la Argentina. (Origen y desarrollo del Partido Comunista y del movimiento obrero y popular argentino), Buenos Aires, 1947, nota 22, p. 17.

²³ Hernán Camarero: A la conquista de la clase obrera. Los comunistas y el mundo del trabajo en la Argentina, 1920-1935, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2007, p. XXI.

²⁴ José Ratzler: El movimiento socialista en Argentina, Buenos Aires, Ágora, 1981, p. 144.

²⁵ It is worthwhile to mention that the internationalist group was named "¡Adelante!", just as the German club and its newspaper: "Vorwärts".

²⁶ Darío Cantón: Elecciones y partidos políticos en la Argentina. Historia, interpretación y balance: 1910-1966, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 1973, p. 112.

seen, for instance, in the support of free commerce – although it was supported from an internationalist perspective and not immutable –, as was the case for the leaders of Argentinean socialism. The mechanical transposition of the theories adopted by European socialism could hardly be noticed in these guidelines.

IV

We have argued that the beginning of the PSI-PC can be traced long before the emergence of the CPG and the JS. A series of key factors in the history of Argentinean socialism was required to enable the Marxist experience to form a party with communist roots. The peak of the debate around the World War coincided with and intensified the most critical period of the struggle for power between the antagonist sides of the PS.²⁷ It is then that the correspondence between the internationalist group and the renewed Marxist faction can be clearly seen. It was this identification with a part of the working and youth movements, which had a great potential to destabilize the inner distribution of power. This pushed the leadership of the party to demand the immediate dissolution of the CPG, at the same time trying to reduce the intervention of the youth. Once Argentinean socialism was fractured, the JS Federation recognised the PSI as the true preserver of the socialist values. The new party highlighted the role of the JS's bravery in opposing the leadership of the PS and militarism, emphasising that their action, "especially oriented to the proletarian youth is, in its tendency to socialist awareness, purely a class action".²⁸ Several socialists who had been distinguished members of the Club *Vorwärts*, whose militant contribution was crucial to the foundation of the PS, adopted an identical standpoint.²⁹ Such are the resounding cases of Augusto Kühn, Carlos Mauli and Germán Müller. The PSI implicitly promised to take over the revolutionary mission that Ave Lallemand and his people had not been able to carry out.

The Argentinean communists moved towards this pioneering faction, which was self-proclaimed as the conveyor of radical Marxist analysis, in order to provide themselves with philosophical and political principles. This acknowledgment and self-authentication was following a logical and identifiable path; even if it was strategically covert with the same aim as communism in its beginning of finding a space in the foundation myth that would provide it with originality in opposition to the ancient left forces. In this way, the first public intervention of the rupturist internationalists attempted to introduce themselves to the workers as the promoters of an unprecedented experience of steering class struggle in Argentina against the oppression originated by the impositions of wage labour. This interpretation will be superseded once the official PC historian par excellence, Leonardo Paso, explains that "The consequent beginning of theoretical development and political action against imperialism, based on Lenin's immortal work, *Imperialism... [the Highest Stage of Capitalism]*, which he began to write in 1916, enabled Lallemand and his internationalist Marxist group to found the Communist Party in 1918 in our country".³⁰

Through identifying socialist internationalism with the Club *Vorwärts*' working class thinking, highlighting the continuum between the latter and Russian Bolshevism, Paso proposed a

²⁷ Daniel Campione: La formación del Partido Socialista Internacional. Hacia la ruptura. In: *Razón y Revolución*, N° 7, verano de 2001, pp. 81-97, here: p. 92.

²⁸ *La Internacional*, I, 1, 5.8.1917, p. 6.

²⁹ Emilio Corbière: Orígenes del comunismo argentino. Los socialistas y la guerra del catorce. In: *Todo es Historia*, N° 81, febrero de 1974, pp. 9-27, here: p. 11.

³⁰ Leonardo Paso: Introducción. In: Germán Ave Lallemand: La clase obrera y el nacimiento del marxismo en la Argentina, Buenos Aires, Anteo, 1974, pp. 42-43. Meanwhile, José Ratzer, the leader of the Communist Youth and later founder of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Argentina, was of the same mindset as Paso. Cf. Los marxistas argentinos del noventa, Buenos Aires, Ágora, 1981, p. 133.

hereditary bond between Leninism and Argentinean communism. It is undeniable that internationalist socialism is not the outcome of a practical irruption carried out in the vacuum, but the consequence of an identifiable historical process. The emergence and consolidation of internal tendencies within the PS were the triggers for its manifestation. However, it is true that the future founders of communism in Argentina did not have more than a brief idea of Lenin's conceptions with which he tried to agitate the representatives of the Second International at the different congresses and conferences. Nonetheless, these theories never gained enough strength.³¹

As opposed to what happened in the later years of subjection to the Soviet Union's Communist Party, there emerged an independence of thought in the PC that showed its ability to assimilate and to adapt the theoretical and practical directions resulting from various areas which are considered convenient for undertaking its new political project. When internationalist socialism was free to conduct itself, it emulated the PS at first by assuming the demands contained in the minimum programme as their own.³² The internationalist leaders found an instrument in the parliamentary struggle to obtain improvements of the material conditions of the working class. This was a result of having kept the socialist premise that transformed the National Congress into a space of intervention for proletarian agitation. The parliamentary struggle was limited to a defensive and preparatory role in the proto-communist plan to generate social revolutionary consciousness. The Marxists did not split from the main party to repeat the old formulas. This was made explicit by the Russian revolution. The October Revolution was indeed received with worry and caution in the PS. The internationalists hurried their support and "expressed the hope to build the Socialist and Workers' International based on revolutionary Marxism".³³ Even keeping a programme of minimum reforms as a social-democratic inheritance, the PSI was oriented to outline a programme of maximum transformation. The path to adopt a specific methodology of militancy oriented to solve the problems belonging exclusively to the working class was a concern that struck the internationalists the same day they decided to become an independent organic unit. One of the resolutions the left wing adopted at the 1st Congress of the PSI on January 5 and 6, 1918, consisted in establishing the mandatory affiliation to the corresponding union for all its members. The new members were previously very critical of the detachment from the PS with regard to the proletarian basis. They adhered to the syndicalist FORA in 1919, but with the utmost caution regarding the apolitical management of revolutionary syndicalism. In this sense, we consider that these arguments demonstrate how unjustified it is to overstress the relation of dependence between socialism and communism in Argentina at the beginning of 1918.

V

György Lukács in 1920 warned about the dangers of the growing autonomy that the parliamentary sector of a political party could grant itself, which would necessarily lead to a decision making power that could not be held accountable for its actions by the affiliates. He pointed out that "experience teaches us that the relation between party and faction is

³¹ About the difficulties encountered to broadcast Leninist assumptions at this time cf. Roman Rosdolsky: *La política oportunista de la Segunda Internacional y la política de paz de los bolcheviques antes de la Revolución de Octubre*. In: AAVV: *Guerra y revolución*, México, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 1984, p. 47; Georges Haupt (1969): *Lenin, los Bolcheviques y la Segunda Internacional (1905-1914)*. In: *Idem*, pp. 120-121, pp. 126-127.

³² Daniel Campione: *Juan Ferlini. Un marxista revolucionario en el Concejo Deliberante*. In: *Cuadernos de la Fundación de Investigaciones Sociales y Políticas*, N° 5 (2° serie), Buenos Aires, marzo de 2001, pp. 1-35, here: p. 7.

³³ Oscar Arévalo: *Historia del Partido Comunista*. In: *Todo es Historia*, N° 250, April 1988, pp. 6-35, here: p. 10.

constantly inverted, and it is the party then that has to aid the parliamentary faction".³⁴ This pushed revolutionary Marxism to abandon its relations with the parliamentary sector which was constantly consolidating its hegemony within the Socialist Party, which could not escape the traditional factionalism of Argentinean politics.

As a group separate from socialism, the PC was able to carry out an important and growing insertion into the industrial labour world. This position gave it a primary place in terms of organising and conflict solving. However, this relationship in the area of production did not find a correlation in the sphere of political participation. As Hernán Camarero points out, the party from which communism had detached itself after condemning the fact that workers' claims were being disregarded, would regularly obtain the majority of votes in the elections in Buenos Aires – the most industrialised city in the country –, or would become the most important minority, while "the PC obtained just a 10% or a 20% of the votes the socialists obtained".³⁵ Whereas the education level of the members of parliament during this period was very high, it was rather low in society. This situation was not to be repeated in the case of the Communist Party. The working class had left an overwhelming imprint among the leaders of the new party. This characteristic also applied to its members, and had a growing impact during the Bolshevisation of the party from 1924 on.

The reasons for the political failure of communism are less important if one attempts to characterise the PC as a class party. Parties such as the communist do not correspond to identifiable groups in the quantitative aspect as in the case of mass parties, but are rather characterised by the qualitative aspect of their internal structure, that is to say as a cadre party.³⁶ Its size did not stop the Communist Party from being, while its autonomy from Moscow lasted, the political party which expressed the interests of the Argentinean industrial proletariat.

³⁴ György Lukács (1920): *Revolución socialista y antiparlamentarismo*, Córdoba, *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente*, N° 41, 1973, p. 20.

³⁵ Hernán Camarero: *Socialismo y movimiento sindical: una articulación débil. La COA y sus relaciones con el PS durante la década de 1920*. In: Hernán Camarero y Carlos Miguel Herrera (eds.): *El Partido Socialista en Argentina. Sociedad, política e ideas a través de un siglo*, Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2005. pp. 185-217, here: p. 215.

³⁶ Maurice Duverger (1951): *Los partidos políticos*, México D.F., FCE, 1957, pp. 93-101.