

Antonio Gramsci 1916

Newspapers and the Workers

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These are the days of subscription campaigns. The editors and administrators of bourgeois newspapers tidy up their display windows, paint some varnish on their shop signs and appeal for the attention of the passer-by (that is, the readers) to their wares. Their wares are newspapers of four or six pages that go out every day or evening in order to inject in the mind of the reader ways of feeling and judging the facts of current politics appropriate for the producers and sellers of the press.

We would like to discuss, with the workers especially, the importance and seriousness of this apparently innocent act, which consists in choosing the newspaper you subscribe to. It is a choice full of snares and dangers which must be made consciously, applying criteria and after mature reflection.

Above all, the worker must resolutely reject any solidarity with a bourgeois newspaper. And he must always, always, always remember that the bourgeois newspaper (whatever its hue) is an instrument of struggle motivated by ideas and interests that are contrary to his. Everything that is published is influenced by one idea: that of serving the dominant class, and which is ineluctably translated into a fact: that of combating the laboring class. And in fact, from the first to the last line the bourgeois newspaper smells of and reveals this preoccupation.

But the beautiful – that is the ugly – thing is this: that instead of asking for money from the bourgeois class to support it in its pitiless work in its favor, the bourgeois newspapers manage to be paid by...the same laboring classes that they always combat. And the laboring class pays; punctually, generously.

Hundreds of thousands of workers regularly and daily give their pennies to the bourgeois newspapers, thus assisting in creating their power. Why? If you were to ask this of the first worker you were to see on the tram or the street with a bourgeois paper spread before him you would hear: “Because I need to hear about what happening.” And it would never enter his head that the news and the ingredients with which it is cooked are exposed with an art that guides his ideas and influences his spirit in a given direction. And yet he knows that this newspaper is opportunist, and that one is for the rich, that the third, the fourth, the fifth is tied to political groups with interests diametrically opposed to his.

And so every day this same worker is able to personally see that the bourgeois newspapers tell even the simplest of facts in a way that favors the bourgeois class and damns the working class and its politics. Has a strike broken out? The workers are always wrong as far as the bourgeois newspapers are concerned. Is there a demonstration? The demonstrators are always wrong, solely because they are workers they are always hotheads, rioters, hoodlums. The government passes a law? It’s always good, useful and just, even if it’s...not. And if there’s an electoral, political or administrative struggle? The best programs and candidates are always those of the bourgeois parties.

And we’re aren’t even talking about all the facts that the bourgeois newspapers either keep quiet about, or travesty, or falsify in order to mislead, delude or maintain in ignorance the laboring public. Despite this, the culpable acquiescence of the worker to the bourgeois newspapers is

limitless. We have to react against this and recall the worker to the correct evaluation of reality. We have to say and repeat that the pennies tossed there distractedly into the hands of the newsboy are projectiles granted to a bourgeois newspaper, which will hurl it, at the opportune moment, against the working masses.

If the workers were to be persuaded of this most elementary of truths they would learn to boycott the bourgeois press with the same unity and discipline that the bourgeoisie boycott the newspapers of the workers, that is, the Socialist press. Don't give financial assistance to the bourgeois press, which is your adversary. This is what should be our battle cry in this moment that is characterized by the subscription campaigns of all the bourgeois newspapers. Boycott them, boycott them, boycott them!