

Antonio Gramsci 1917

Character

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Translated: by [Mitchell Abidor](#);

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Our adversaries don't worry themselves with judging the attitude of socialists in the same way as they do principles and methods that the socialists have always professed and followed. Doing do this would mean truly considering them and doing something concrete. They don't even attempt this judgment, being incapable of it.

They lose their way when placed before men of character, grope about in the darkness, giving up all hope in the blind alleys of gossip, of slander, of defamation. They don't understand a straightforward, strictly coherent demeanor. They are hypnotized by facts, by current events. They don't understand the man of character, who weighs and judges facts not in and of themselves as much as in their relationship with the past and the future; that facts are thus judged primarily for their effect, their eternal nature. They are mystics of the fact. And a mystic can't judge: he can only bless or hate.

But this is the strength of Italian socialists. To have preserved character. To have succeeded in defeating sentimentality, to have succeeded in throttling the throbbing of the heart as a stimulus to action, as a stimulus to the manifestations of collective life. In this period of history the Italian Socialists have realized for historic ends humanity in its most perfect form. A humanity that doesn't fall into the easy traps of illusion. A

humanity that has rejected as useless and harmful the inferior forms of spiritual life: the impulses of the tender heart and sentimentality.

They have rejected this consciously. Because they knew how to assimilate the teachings of their greatest teachers, as well as the teachings that are spontaneously produced by bourgeois reality, bitten into by the reagents of socialist criticism. The Italian Socialists have remained steadfast in their ranks determined by the demands of the social class. As a collective they are not disturbed by the painful spectacles that are presented to them. As a collective they don't faint when the still breathing corpse of a murdered child is thrown at their feet. The commotion that every individual has felt, the heartache, the sympathy that every individual has felt hasn't scratched the granite-like compactness of the class.

If every individual has a heart, the class, as such, does not have a heart in the sense that feeble humanism usually gives it. The class has a will, the class has a character. All of its life is molded by this determination, this character, with nothing left over. As a class it can have no other form of solidarity than that of class, no other form of struggle than that of class, no other nation than the class, that is, the International. Its heart is nothing but the consciousness of its class being, the consciousness of its ends, the consciousness of its future. Of the future that is its alone, for which it demands the solidarity and collaboration of no one, for which it doesn't desire the throbbing of anyone's heart. There only throbs, in its immense dynamic and creative potential, its tenacious determination, implacable towards all who are foreign to it.

Our adversaries don't understand this. In Italy character is not understood. And this is the only thing in which the Socialists can benefit and have benefited Italianness. They have given Italy that which it has lacked up till the present moment: A living and dramatically throbbing example of an adamant and superbly proud character.

