

ARTICLE

**THE DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR IDEALS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE
DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION: THEORETICAL, STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL
CONTROVERSIES****EMYLY KATHYURY KATAOKA¹**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8550-8169>**LUCIANA PEDROSA MARCASSA²**ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5313-1002>

RESUMO: O artigo problematiza alguns dos alcances e limites da Estratégia Democrática e Popular (EDP) e a influência desse ideário no campo educacional, explicitada através das lutas pela democratização da educação. Para compreender a luta pela democratização da educação resgatamos: a produção da pesquisa educacional entre os anos 1980 e início dos anos 2000; a constituição do Fórum Nacional em Defesa da Escola Pública (FNDEP), por abranger significativa representação na área; a construção do *Plano Nacional de Educação – A Proposta da Sociedade Brasileira* (1997), documento que sintetizou de forma singular as bandeiras de luta do campo educacional; e as resoluções e programas de governo do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) que tratam da educação, produzidos entre o final dos anos 1970 e 2002, por terem sido o principal partido da classe trabalhadora nesse período. O objetivo foi evidenciar como as orientações da estratégia democrática e popular foram assimiladas pelos movimentos que lutaram pela democratização da educação e em defesa da escola pública, apresentando as bandeiras levantadas, táticas utilizadas e as consequências para a organização política. Trata-se de um estudo bibliográfico que se vale de análise histórica, conceitual e documental. Em nossas conclusões, apontamos que há certa convergência entre as produções da pesquisa educacional, as reivindicações explícitas no Plano Nacional de Educação (1997), a organização do FNDEP, as resoluções do PT e o ideário democrático e popular. O campo educacional, enquanto parte da totalidade, expressou de forma particular a consciência prática da classe trabalhadora.

Palavras-chave: democratização, educação, ideário democrático e popular.

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ABSTRACT: The article inquires some of the scope and limits of the Democratic and Popular Strategy (DPS) and its influence in the educational field made explicit through the struggles for the democratization of education. To understand the struggles for the democratization of education we recall: the production of educational research between the 1980s and early 2000s; the establishment of the

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Brazilian National Forum in Defense of Public Schools (BNFDPS), as it encompasses significant representation in the area; the construction of the National Plan for Education - The Brazilian Society Proposal (1997), a document that synthesized in a unique way the struggle flags of the educational field; and the resolutions and government programs of the Workers' Party (WP) dealing with education, produced between the late 1970s and 2002, as they were the main working class' party in this period. The objective was to show how the proposals oriented by democratic and popular strategy were assimilated by the movements that fought for the democratization of education and in defense of the public school, which were the flags raised, tactics used and the consequences for the political organization. This is a bibliographic study that uses historical, conceptual, and documentary analysis. In our conclusions, we point out that there is a certain convergence between the educational research productions, the explicit demands in the National Plan for Education (1997), the organization of the BNFDPS, the WP resolutions and the democratic and popular ideals. The educational field, as part of the totality, expressed in a particular way the working class' practical consciousness.

Keywords: democratization, education, democratic and popular ideas.

LAS IDEAS DEMOCRÁTICAS Y POPULARES Y LA LUCHA POR LA DEMOCRATIZACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN: CONTROVERSIAS TEÓRICAS, ESTRATÉGICAS Y TÁCTICAS

RESÚMEN: El artículo problematiza algunos de los alcances y límites de la Estrategia Democrática y Popular (EDEP) y las luchas generales guiadas por este ideal en el campo de la educación. Para comprender la lucha por la democratización de la educación recordamos: la producción de investigación educativa entre los años 1980 y principios de los años 2000; el establecimiento del Foro Nacional de Defensa de las Escuelas Públicas (FNDEP), ya que cuenta con una representación significativa en el área; la construcción del Plan Nacional de Educación - La Propuesta de la Sociedad Brasileña (1997), documento que sintetizó de manera única las banderas de lucha del campo educativo; y las resoluciones y programas de gobierno del Partido de los Trabajadores (PT) relacionados con la educación, elaborados entre finales de la década de 1970 y 2002, por ser el principal partido de la clase obrera en este período. El objetivo fue mostrar cómo los lineamientos de la estrategia democrática y popular fueron asimilados por los movimientos que lucharon por la democratización de la educación y en defensa de la escuela pública, presentando las banderas levantadas, tácticas empleadas y las consecuencias para la organización política. Se trata de un estudio bibliográfico que utiliza análisis histórico, conceptual y documental. En nuestras conclusiones señalamos que existe cierta convergencia entre las producciones de investigación educativa, las demandas explícitas del Plan Nacional de Educación (1997), la organización de la FNDEP, las resoluciones del PT y las ideas democráticas y populares. El campo educativo, como parte de la totalidad, expresa de manera particular la conciencia práctica de la clase trabajadora.

Palabras clave: democratización, educación, ideales democráticos y populares.

INTRODUCTION

This article is an invitation to reflect on the organization and political orientation of education workers. We present a discussion about the movement of educators, addressing the educational sector and its relationship with the general mobilization of the working class between the period of redemocratization in Brazil, which began with the end of the corporative-military dictatorship (1964 coup), until the early 2000s. This extensive periodization is justified because, in the present, both struggles and forms of social organization are paradigmatically linked to that past, so that the experiences of that period resonate and still guide the current form of mobilization of educators and the working class as a whole.

For this research, we carried out a bibliographical study, also counting on historical, conceptual and documental analysis. The research sources were the theoretical collection produced by authors who became great references in the field of Brazilian progressive education and the documental collection built by the educators' movement spread in the country and its associations, as well as the resolutions and government programs of the Partido dos Trabalhadores ³(PT) - for having been the main organizer of the class in the researched period. We selected expressive authors who had great contribution in the critical reading of the Brazilian school education, with significant proposals of intervention in the educational reality, which are: Dermeval Saviani, Gaudêncio Frigotto, Lucília Machado, Guiomar Namó de Mello and Paulo Freire. To understand the trajectory of the demands of the mobilizations of the educational field around democratization, which gained strength from the 1980s onwards, we recover the constitution of the Fórum Nacional em Defesa da Escola Pública - National Forum in Defense of Public School - (FNDEP), as personification of the mobilization of the educational sector, gathering broad sectors (education workers' unions, student movement and different institutions of the educational field), and the construction of the Plano Nacional de Educação - Uma Proposta da Sociedade Brasileira (National Education Plan - A Proposal of the Brazilian Society, 1997), document synthesis of the flags of the struggle for education. We will also present the study of the documents produced by the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party), covering the formulation of resolutions and government programmes between the end of the 1970s and 2002, delimiting this period because it coincides with the genesis, development and apogee of the Democratic and Popular Strategy (known by the acronym EDP).

This research is part of a series of studies on the theoretical, strategic and tactical controversies of class struggles in Brazil, which seek to understand the processes that led the working class as a whole from contestation to accommodation to the order. Before proceeding, we shall briefly refer to the concepts of strategy and tactics. In class struggle, "**strategy is the theory of the combination between the various particular forms and singular moments of clash** between the blocks in presence (always led by a fundamental social class) with a view to reaching the final objectives" (NEVES, 2016, p.189, emphasis added). Strategy refers to the articulation of the different battles to be fought, aiming at success in the war as a whole. Tactics refers to each of the singular battles, not having an end in itself. It is worth noting that strategy is a theory set in motion which, when put into effect, deals with an objectivity that escapes its control, and is not an isolated moment, so that the temporality is greater than a single successful attempt, and does not result from the mere intentionality of the political subjects. It is understood that the EDP was not formulated a priori, it is a strategic orientation that was engendered by the class as a whole in the period of redemocratisation (late 1970s) from the movement of a set of forces questioning the social order. The PT was/is not the only organization acting within the working class, but, without a doubt, it was (and still is) the most expressive party, aggregating and influencing a larger number of militants. Fruit of the resumption of working-class mobilizations, the

³ T/N: The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) is a Brazilian political party. Founded in 1980, it is one of the largest and most important left-wing movements in Latin America. In December 2021, the party had 1,606,892 affiliates, making it the second largest political party in Brazil. In 2003, with the inauguration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as President of the Republic, the party took command of the Brazilian Executive for the first time. Lula was re-elected in 2006, ending his mandate with the highest approval rating of all time: 87% . He was succeeded in 2011 by Dilma Rousseff, a minister in the Lula government. She was re-elected in 2014 by a narrow margin of votes and left the presidency in August 2016 after a request for impeachment was approved by Congress.

party collaborated in the construction of a field of social and political forces, whose strategy became hegemonic. This camp is composed of both militants and sympathizers who never joined the PT and had no such pretension, but who were guided by the Democratic and Popular Strategy (EDP). In stating that the PT was guided by the EDP, we emphasize that it was not born with a specific theoretical orientation, and that it is not possible to attribute the responsibility for its deviations exclusively to a particular formulator or intellectual (IASI, 2012). Moreover, the existence of a predominant strategy does not eliminate internal disagreements and clashes, but indicates what predominated as a policy in the party and its influence on the left-wing movement in general.

Seeking to differentiate itself from the communist tradition, the party that emerged between 1979 and 1980 sought to overcome the limits of the National Democratic Strategy led by the Partido Comunista Brasileiro- PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), criticising the need to ally itself with the national bourgeoisie in order to implement a democratic stage prior to the socialist stage. The PT intended to distance itself from both the social democratic tradition and so-called real socialism, reaffirming the socialist goal. According to Iasi (2013), the EDP took shape at the 5th National Meeting of the PT (held in 1989). Seeking an original elaboration, it was read that the Brazilian social formation had reached a regionally and socially unequal development and that, consequently, the popular sectors were in opposition to the bourgeois sectors, hence its popular character. This idea was reinforced by the understanding that the Brazilian State was authoritarian and impermeable to the participation of those "from below" (autocratic). From this would result the need for democratic struggle.

The central assumption was the impossibility of the immediate realisation of socialism. Therefore, it would be necessary to accumulate forces in the presentation of popular demands. Popular demands, organised by an anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist and anti-landowning programme, would clash with the autocratic state, and could lead to a rupture or strengthening of civil society, which would gradually implement a set of reforms capable of overcoming capitalism. The struggle was set on the terrain of democracy, in the combination of social struggles with participation in elections (winning executive positions in the government), so as to change the correlation of forces, triggering radical reforms. Consequently, democracy became the means and end of socialismo.

The formulation gained strength in the social materiality for presenting itself as the adequate response to social demands, i.e., it provided strong arguments that seemed to be able to explain the capitalism that developed here and brought concrete (and feasible) proposals for action. Even though there were some divergences and clashes, the general orientation followed a very close direction, and for this reason it became predominant. Analyzing the development of the formulations of the PT, from its foundation to the moment of winning the federal government (2002), Iasi (2006) observes a transformation in the party, moving from the negation of the bourgeois order to an accommodation to it. For the author, this transition is linked to the strategic formulation of the EDP and an important aspect of the formulation, which corroborates the transition, was the concept of accumulation of forces and the understanding of the state in this process. The presidential election victory assumed a central role in the strategy, leading to programmatic moderation and the broadening of the range of alliances. Parallel to this, there was a weakening of the trade union movement and mobilisations in general, consequences of the productive restructuring and neoliberal policies of the 1990s. When the PT came to the federal government (2002), in order to maintain governability, there was also a disarming of political organisations. On the EDP, Iasi (2012, p.310) makes an important point:

Although this formulation has fulfilled an important role in the dynamics of the class struggle and has meant a powerful instrument of mobilisation, struggle and organisation of the workers which has reflected on significant levels in the constitution of a class consciousness (the same can be said of the national-democratic strategy), its outcome has produced something very different from what was expected..

Among the problems arising from the formulation of the EDP is the fact that many of the popular demands presented by the social movements were restricted to the search for the expansion of democracy and participation, as they were compromised by the link established with the bourgeois institutionality, undermining the autonomy of the movements. This occurred in the same historical

period in which the bourgeoisie, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, defended the expansion of democratic participation to obtain the consensus of the dominated.

From the 1980s onwards, many of those who fought for the democratisation of education, with the defence of public and free schools as their main banner of struggle, were guided by the general struggles of the working class, being influenced by EDP. The educational field expresses, in a particular way, the practical consciousness of the working class, because, in class struggles, we form a social vision of the world marked by the characteristics of our time, sharing ways of thinking and acting, often accepted without critical analysis (GRAMSCI, 1978, p.12).

It would be impossible to talk about workers' organization in the current cycle of struggles without making any reference to the PT, either to criticize or to defend it; after all, the party had an enormous importance in the struggle for the end of the corporate-military dictatorship and for the re-democratization of the country. However, the educational policies carried out in the federal government by the Partido dos Trabalhadores contributed to the productivity of the capital, enabling the growth of business performance, having inserted education in the strategy of governability and formation of an ethos consistent with the new spirit of capitalism (LEHER, 2010). For this reason, despite the occasional advances, its policies collaborated with the direct and indirect privatization of public education. The implementation of such policies did not occur without contradictions and disputes, but as part of the unfolding of a collective project, built by the class as a whole within their struggles in a given historical period. Although they have particular characteristics, the struggles in education are part of the totality, and do not lose their connection with the general unleashing of struggles. Let us now see how the ideology of EDP had repercussions in the educational area.

THEORETICAL BASES OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR IDEALS IN EDUCATION

The corporate-military dictatorial regime sought to shape the school through efficient devices of control, however, such action had a counterface by deflagrating spaces of resistance and opposition. In the educational field, during the 1960s and 1970s, among those who opposed the dictatorial regime, there was a great influence of French theorists, such as Bourdieu, Passeron, Baudelout, Establet, and Althusser, and of the Brazilian Paulo Freire. Their theories, relating the social structure and education, provided an important theoretical arsenal to combat the educational reforms and the educational model in force.

From the 1970s onwards, the dictatorial policy was altered by the process of "democratic reopening", a "slow, gradual and secure" opening - quite selective, as it never stopped persecuting communist militants - influenced by the end of the economic miracle and the international oil crisis. Concomitantly, there was a resurgence of the trade union movement and strikes in the midst of a tense international scenario. Influenced by this political situation, many educators, encouraged by the spirit of re-democratization of the country and the resumption of working class mobilizations, with the political leadership of the working class and its organization, identified themselves with the left (NETTO, 2008). According to Vieira (1994), in that historical period, educational research has expanded as a result of the production of postgraduate programs that had grown in quality and quantity. The French theorists, until then reference of the left field, began to be questioned for being labeled as "immobilists", at the same time that the educational production is guided predominantly by the concept of the transforming role of the school, clashing with the previous critical studies that dealt with the reproductive character of social relations of educational institutions (VIEIRA, 1994; FAVARO, 2014). In this new theoretical production, the school ceased to be seen as a mere reproducer of the system, and schooling came to be understood as a potentiator of the democratisation of society, since there was room for contradiction within it.

In this new period of the production of educational research, some of the researchers who gained prominence were Dermeval Saviani, Gaudêncio Frigotto, Lucília Machado, Guiomar Namó de Mello and Paulo Freire. Besides having direct relationship with the new educational academic production, the authors were active participants in the new cycle of Brazilian Conferences on Education (CBE) and in the construction of the National Forum in Defense of Public School (FNDEP),

contributing to the criticism and to the formulation of public policies, either through direct participation in their elaboration or by becoming theoretical references.

According to Vieira (1994), a striking feature of these new formulations was the centrality of the category of contradiction in the analysis of school education, in which the school came to be understood as a privileged locus in the defense of the interests of the dominated. Among the post-graduate programs in education, the Program of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) played an important role in the political and academic reorganization of the educators and represented the advance of critical consciousness in that period. According to Handfas (2008, p.381):

Among most of the researchers who joined the PUC-SP post-graduate programme, there was a predominant position that one should seek an intervention within the State and in the direction of educational policies and an active participation in institutional spaces, conceiving the very insertion of the educators and, as a consequence, the organisation of the pedagogical space as the fundamental elements for the construction of pedagogical theory and for the realisation of pedagogical action.

This theoretical production brought numerous contributions to the sector when reflecting on the educational problems, however, there were limits in the theoretical accumulation achieved, given the censorship of the dictatorial regime and the influence of traditional humanism among teaching professionals. The conjuncture of mobilizations and organization of the working class in the 1980s, as well as the rise of democratic and popular governments, reinforced the premise of the possibility of achievements through democracy, especially since these were the result of broad social mobilization. In that period, the theoretical production of education, among those researchers who identified themselves with the workers' movement, indicated the need to occupy the spaces and fight for educational policies to bring about the democratization of education.

The counterpoint to the previous theories (called "immobilist") sought to strengthen that they made more remote "the possibility of linking the education systems with the efforts to overcome the problem of marginality in the countries of the region" (SAVIANI, 2006, p.29), or, as Frigotto (2010, p.34) points out, the "analysis of critical-reproductive authors, ended up falling into immobility and the belief of the impossibility of organizing, inside the school, family, factory, and in civil society as a whole, the interests of the dominated". While the virtues of the school were reinforced, the objective and historical limits of the educational institutions within the capitalist system were mitigated. After all, the proposed political-pedagogical action was thought "to be implemented in the conditions of the current Brazilian society, in which the division of knowledge predominates". (SAVIANI, 2006, p.80). Thus, among the Marxist researchers, there was an explicit political option for the direct struggle in the (state) educational institutions and for the guidance of public educational policies, encouraging the active participation of workers in these spaces, because they understood that "the school receives an active and relevant dimension in the revolutionary task of the working class" (FRIGOTTO, 2010, p.223). Such direction of educational policies also had the sense to stimulate the process of class organization and contribute to the struggle for access to elaborated knowledge. In view of this, the theoretical production of the period was marked by an over-politicization (HANDFAS, 2008) or, as we prefer to call, overvaluation in the analysis of educational processes, leading to an overestimation of the potential of the school and the occupation of institutional spaces, as well as the possibility of interference in educational policies.

In the framework of this new theoretical production there was a certain consensus that socialist revolution was not viable in that historical phase, therefore, solutions were sought in the context of bourgeois institutionality, in order to contribute to the construction of socialism within the limits of the conjuncture experienced. From a particular Gramscian⁴ reading, it was foreseen that the conquest of

⁴ There are great controversies about the uses and possible abuses of Gramscian texts. Edmundo Dias wrote an important article on some interpretative problems committed by readers of Gramsci in Brazil and Italy (cf. DIAS, 1996, p. 105-119). Another important research that problematizes the apprehension of key concepts and the context of the writing of Gramscian texts is the book by Alvaro Bianchi (2008).

hegemony—operating with this category associated exclusively with consensus⁵ and excluding from it the coercive moment - in civil society would be the mechanism of social transformation, the path of revolution. In this elaboration, the way to transition to socialism was the expansion of democratization in various social instances and the bourgeois state could have a government committed to the interests of the workers, in order to implement democratic policies. The reading was consistent with the ideology that guided the theoreticians and militants at that juncture and the conditions of the diffusion of Marxism at the time. Even though they were clear about the class character of the state, they ended up placing the bourgeois state apparatus as susceptible of being controlled by the workers, pursuing the institutional struggle as a way of bringing public policies into effect. Lucília Machado illustrates this position when speaking about the role of partial conquests and reforms:

They do not necessarily imply the strengthening of bourgeois power. It is up to the proletariat to push the state in the direction that is most convenient for it, because freedom means educating the state, making it subordinate to civil society. The reforms do not necessarily mean a slavish belief in the state apparatus and the democratic miracle. They are inserted in the perspective of the development of contradictions, that is, in the dialectic process between continuity and rupture (MACHADO, 1989, p. 262).

In the reading made by Marxist researchers, the possibility of revolutionary action was ruled out because it would not be feasible in the economic and social conditions of the country at that time. Therefore, the need for a cumulative and progressive process of rights and achievements in society as a whole and also in the area of education was foreseen. It seems possible to indicate that Gramsci's thought was adequate or adjusted to justify the option for a peaceful and institutional action. This proposition, however, was not shared by Guiomar Namó de Mello who, even though she was part of the progressive field of education, already at that time defended the democratization of education as a mediation for a democratic society and not for the construction of socialism. Even so, her proposition was partially incorporated by a portion of educators (Marxists and non-Marxists) to the extent that, throughout the 1990s, socialism came to be confused with democracy.

The adaptation to the capitalist cycle of flexible accumulation (productive restructuring), which had already impacted the workers' way of life around the world, was promoted in Brazil especially in the 1990s, bringing precariousness in working conditions and changes in the workers' organization and also causing an intense crisis in the unionism (ANTUNES, 2006). Austerity, fiscal reduction and the erosion of social commitment were the watchwords of all states of advanced capitalism. The Brazilian state was impacted by the counter-reform, adopting neoliberal policies and making the adjustments proposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, adapting itself to the dynamics of international capitalism. These mechanisms enabled capital to emerge from one more of its cyclical and periodic crises, preserving the reproduction of the capitalist system. This new stage of capitalist sociability was strengthened by means of a social pact (FONTES, 2010) with conflict management, fragmentation of the demands into manageable parcels and the dismantling of militant organizations through direct violence (police truculence), indirect violence (privatizations and layoffs) and the co-optation of leaderships. In relation to the co-optation of leaderships, Coelho (2005b) understands that "this migration of the 'most active elements' of a subaltern social group to the zone of hegemony of the dominant group was the phenomenon that Gramsci called **transformism**" (p.140, author's emphasis).

The situation of the 1990s meant that workers did not fight for new conquests, but in defence of minimum conquests. Workers' organizations like the CUT 'began to defend a "realistic

⁵ Just to illustrate this position, we present here a passage in which Saviani talks about the process of overcoming the State and relates hegemony to consensus: "That is, once class society is overcome, the historical moment arrives when common interests prevail, domination gives way to hegemony, coercion to persuasion, repression is undone, understanding prevails. Then, the conditions for the full exercise of the educational practice will be historically given (SAVIANI, 2006, p.87, our emphasis).

⁶ T/N: The Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) is a Brazilian mass trade union organization, at the highest level, of class character, autonomous and democratic, whose commitment is to defend the immediate and historical interests of the working class. Present in all branches of economic activity in the country, the CUT is consolidated as the largest central union in Brazil, Latin America and the 5th largest in the world, with 3,806 affiliated entities, 7,847,077 associated workers and 23,981,044 workers in the base. Data from CUT's website <<https://www.cut.org.br/conteudo/breve-historico>>

policy", proposing dialogue and consensus to negotiate, moving towards a unionism of partnership between capital and labor, in which the entity directed its struggles towards income distribution and improvement of the living conditions of workers. In this process, the sectorial chambers⁷ favoured the domestication of union mobilisations and the tripartite negotiation (state, workers and companies) of public funds led to the dependence of the state and its subservience (MATTOS, 2014).

The difficult situation did not lead the organisations and the theoreticians to the necessary balance of the project and of the strategy that guided the struggles and the educational agendas demanded in the 1980s. Some Marxist researchers, seeking to respond to the demands of the period and in order to maintain the defence of socialism and Marxism in a moment in which both were actively questioned, remained on the defensive, reaffirming the content of their previous productions (1980s), indicating that one of the problems would be the insufficient accumulation of forces.

In the 1990s, some theoreticians from the progressive camp presented the social pact as a necessity of the period, among them Paulo Freire⁸. For the educator, democracy needed the agreement between antagonistic parts for the survival of the whole, even if there were distinct interests between the classes. Moreover, even the Marxist scholars, in that period, did not pay attention to the fact that the greater participation of workers in different instances, the "expansion of civil society", was part of the (re)organization of the capitalist system itself, that, while expanding the "capital-imperialist social relations in the current sociability of Brazilian life", did so through "various forms of convincing (production of consensus)", at the same time that it maintained and increased the "coercion (criminalization of resistance and counter-hegemonic organizations)". (FONTES, 2010, p. 257-258).

The 1990s were characterised by a series of defeats for the working class and its demobilisation. Contradictorily, the political orientation prioritized participation and struggle in institutional spaces, sidelining the analysis of the objectivity of the historical process itself and the limitations of the bourgeois state apparatus. Without a radical rupture, researchers linked to the progressive camp ended up "betting that their state and its social policies would be better than the state and social policies of others" (TONET, 2010, p. 24). In the 1990s, although this was not the intention of many researchers and educators in general, to the extent that socialism came to be confused with democracy (or its expansion), the struggle for rights and citizenship was treated as synonymous with emancipation. It was argued, then, that the knowledge present in the school would provide a more active participation of workers in the scope of bourgeois democracy. The proposals for the education of workers were able to walk *pari passu* with the theses of Guiomar Namo de Mello, which followed the neoliberal prescriptions of multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, even though the final objective of the educators committed to the historical project of the working class was different. Let us see how part of these theoretical elaborations ended up being incorporated in the demands of the educational movement.

THE FIGHTS IN DEFENCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The workers' strikes that took place in the ABC Paulista region, in 1978, and the resumption of the fights and the mobilizations had a positive impact in the movements in the field of education, at the same time that national entities were being created - for instance, the Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Educação (ANPEd); the Centro de Estudos Educação e Sociedade (CEDES); the Associação Nacional de Educação (ANDE), all created in the 1970's - and, with them, the editorial reactivation - creation of the Revista Educação e Sociedade, Revista ANDE, and Cadernos CEDES. These entities, together with the Center for Studies of Contemporary Culture (CEDEC), started to organize, in the 1980s, a new cycle of Brazilian Conferences on Education (CBE).

⁷ Spaces in which workers negotiated with businessmen and the state to maintain employment in exchange for tax reductions by the state and the guarantee that workers would not strike or stop production.

⁸ Freire (1997) believes that the new historical phase brought the learning that it was possible to remake the world, starting "new fights at other levels. The learning, after all, that in a new democratic practice, it is possible to go on widening the spaces for pacts between the classes and to go on consolidating the dialogue between the different ones. That is to say, radical positions can be deepened and sectarian ones overcome" (FREIRE, 1997, p.101, our emphasis). This defense complemented his proposal of democratic, non-authoritarian socialism. *e ir consolidando o diálogo entre os diferentes..*

The CBEs brought together academic organizations and workers' associations which, after the 1988 Constitution, became union organizations. In the conferences, they sought to rescue the potentiality of school education in the struggle for the democratization of the school and of society, there was, among the speakers, the willingness to participate actively in the formulation and implementation of educational policy, with concrete and feasible proposals (ANDE, 1987). Among the conferences, it is worth mentioning the fourth CBE (1986), whose theme was Education and the Constituent Assembly, mobilising the speakers in favour of a democratic public school and also for wider conditions of economic, social and political democratisation of society. At the end of the Conference, a letter was approved, known as Letter of Goiânia, which presented an analysis of the Brazilian reality and brought 21 principles on education, society and State, guiding the organization of the education movements in the Constituent - the general elections to choose the parliamentarians who would compose the Constituent Assembly took place in 1986, mobilizing the discussions of the period.

The working method of the Constituent Assembly distributed the parliamentarians in thematic commissions, divided into sub-commissions. In the sub-commissions, for the elaboration of the text on the educational theme, hearings with representative entities were foreseen. Of this process, the National Association of Higher Education Teachers (ANDES), together with the organising associations of the CBEs and other associations, took the opportunity to found the National Forum of Education in the Constituent in Defence of Public Education - officially launched on 9th April 1987, in Brasília, through the National Campaign for Free and Public Schooling, as a mechanism of debate and organisation in the first phase of the National Constituent Assembly. In addition to the campaign in defence of public school, the Forum also drew up a draft proposal for the Constitutional Charter (chapter on education) and a Manifesto in Defence of Public School (PINHEIRO, 2015). The initial goal was "to claim a project for education, as a whole and not only for the school (although this, in the public mode, is the main centre of its attention)" (GOHN, 2001, p.78). The Forum brought together intellectuals, entities, and organized collectives.

The correlation of political forces within the Forum was multiple (GOHN, 2001). Even so, there was an integration movement in the formulation of a unitary educational platform for the Constituent. The aggregating point was the defence of the public school and the opposition to the entrepreneurial-military regime, also characterising itself as a democratic front aimed at the construction of citizenship in the country. It was a space for the construction of agendas and unified actions, even though there were divergences and differences among the entities, both by nature (research entities and unions) and in the orientation of educational policies. Among the internal political disputes, there were clashes between the academics, defending the results of their research, and the union members, asserting their power of representation. Another internal dispute was the clash between the different representations of workers (Central Única dos Trabalhadores versus Central Geral dos Trabalhadores⁹). According to Pinheiro (2015), one of the main disagreements within the Forum was in relation to the public resources applied to education. Thus, the Forum acted as a unit, but each entity that integrated it continued to proceed with its specific agendas and actions, seeking to implement what had been collectively built.

Once the Constituent Assembly was over, starting in October 1988, the struggles and debates shifted to the new Law of Directives and Bases (LDB). The Forum started to call itself the Fórum Nacional em Defesa da Escola Pública (National Forum in Defense of Public School - FNDEP) in 1989. The Forum's action was based on the collaboration with the deputies in the substitute projects for a new national LDB. According to Pino (2010, p.2), at this stage, the objectives of the Forum were: "formulating consensual proposals among national entities committed to public schooling, in the dimensions already established in previous Forum documents and printed in the new Constitution;

⁹ T/N: The Central Geral dos Trabalhadores do Brasil (CGTB), founded in 2004, has its roots in the tensions and divisions that occurred in Brazilian trade unionism in the 1980s. That is why it claims that it was "born" in 1981, at the Conferência Nacional das Classes Trabalhadoras (CONCLAT), and that it was "founded" in 1986. Although the central dispute in the trade union movement was between the Central Geral dos Trabalhadores (CGT) and the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), this fact did not end the internal disputes in both camps. In this sense, if the CUT managed to maintain and even expand its spectrum of influence, in the CGT, a hard process of internal division ended up splitting it. Source: <http://www.fgv.br/cpdoc/acervo/dicionarios/verbete-tematico/central-geral-dos-trabalhadores-do-brasil-cgtb>

coordinating popular pressure in defence of public schooling, in the NLDB¹⁰, during the process of drafting them in the National Congress". The FNDEP's main action was the parliamentary route and the drafting of laws, so its actions were dictated by the dynamics of parliamentary actions. The entities that comprised it were responsible for mobilizing their bases (student and union movements). As of the 1990s, the deputies allied with the Forum were not reelected and the educational organization suffered with the offensive of the neoliberal policies of the Fernando Collor/Itamar Franco and Fernando Henrique Cardoso administrations.

After the loss of support base in Parliament, the Forum began to have less influence on the preparation of the LDB. At the same time, the positions of the educational field became less convergent (PINO, 2010). Law 9394/96, which established the guidelines and bases of education, absorbed a conception of State and society different from that proposed by the Forum. After the LDB debates, the Forum still constituted itself as a space that synthesized the mobilization of the educational sector, being also affected by the transformations of the capitalist dynamics that impacted the national and international conjuncture in the 1990s. It was in this conjuncture that the Forum defended the need to broaden the debate on the consequences of neoliberal policies in education. Its actions were directed toward the construction of an alternative proposal for education, which would contribute to the dispute of the administrative space within the State. For this reason, it created an arena for debate and formulation, holding a series of five National Congresses on Education (Congressos Nacionais de Educação-CONEDs) in 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002, and 2004. The perspective was to expand the Brazilian educational political intervention within the bourgeois State, even considering the critical political moment, suffering with the reduction of budget funds for social policies. One of the Forum's main written contributions was registered in the Plano Nacional de Educação: A Proposta da Sociedade Brasileira (1997) (PNE), a document that synthesizes the flags of the educational fight. It was drawn up by the Organizing Committee of the II CONED, expressing the different debates held throughout the country.

As far as possible, the PNE recovered the wishes of the majority of the population by restoring rights present in the 1988 Federal Constitution. According to Silva (2017, p.78), "the text is representative of the predominant vision of the left in the 1990s and expresses its discussions throughout the period". Currently, many of the proposals contained in the PNE are still being demanded. It has become a reference document by considering Brazilian social, cultural, political and educational dimensions and problems. Its proposals were based on the struggles and propositions "of those who defend a more just and egalitarian society and, consequently, a public, free, democratic, lay and quality education for all at all levels" (FÓRUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA 1997, p.2). The text of the PNE embraced principles, guidelines, priorities and strategies for action, with long, medium and short-term objectives.

The production of a document like the PNE should be highlighted, as it was of great relevance for education workers the enormous effort to produce it together with broad sectors, bringing together a significant national union representation of education workers, student movement and other associations in the area of education. Such collective construction is not at all easy to put into practice. It should also be highlighted the significant set of data on the educational reality (expenses in education, training of teachers and other workers in education, enrolment, failure, evasion, among others), allowing a considerable diagnosis of the situation of education in Brazil. The broad diagnosis and the gathering of the set of demands could subsidize the struggles in the educational field, due to the serious work done. However, despite its relevance, if we intend to make a critical analysis, we cannot fail to situate the limits of what was collectively produced by our class. Throughout the drafting of the PNE, one notes moderations as to the radical nature of the proposals and several concessions to the business community, sometimes including proposals also advocated by the World Bank. The defeated scenario of the 1990s (demobilization and dismantling of social rights) led to the proposal of "viable" alternatives to that context of capitalism. The need to mediate with the present moment made it possible for certain agendas to converge with liberal thought.

¹⁰ New Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Novas Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – NLDB).

The goal of the document was democracy and social inclusion, to enforce the Federal Constitution and give "course to the necessary transformations to improve the quality of life of the majority of the population, the achievement of justice and social equality" (FÓRUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA, 1997, p.3). The document intended to be a political reference of action, having as assumption: "Education, Democracy and Social Quality". It is noted a whole set of words (democracy, inclusion, justice, equality) that make up the liberal ideology, often incorporated by the movement without the necessary criticism.

The PNE defended a national development project that had as its centre the *dignification of man and not the market*. However, in the text, after defending this project, there appears the proposition of a "self-sustained development", in which the State articulates and indicates the "*strengthening of the domestic market* for an economic policy that *strengthens the generation of jobs and income*, agrarian reform, an effective agricultural policy, a *policy of Science and Technology, linked to national needs*" (FORUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA, 1997, p.10, our emphasis). Thus, contradictorily, it proposes the dignification of man and not of the market from the strengthening of the latter. However, it did not seem to us a punctual writing fault, but the way to mediate the negation of the (international) market with the need to develop the national economy. This proposition was coupled with the indication that "School education is a *fundamental instrument for economic, social, cultural and political development* of a country and its people, and to guarantee the basic rights of citizenship and personal freedom" (FÓRUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA, 1997, p.10, our emphasis). Although it criticized the link between education and human development to form "human resources, human capital", the PNE proposals end up linking education and development, indirectly rescuing the theses of the Human Capital Theory, promoted by Theodore William Schultz in 1971.

Among the problematic points of the document is the orientation of public-private partnerships, indicated through proposals for the management of policies and public funds for vocational education with entrepreneurs, as in the highlighted excerpt:

Set up, within two years, Paritary Councils (workers, government and businessmen) to manage the professional training agencies (SENAI, SENAC, SENAR, SENAT), or other initiatives, with a view to fiscal control and the formalisation of systematic processes for the definition and evaluation of the services provided (FÓRUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA, 1997, p.39).

Another highlight is the proposal of integration of public and private institutions, not defending the end of public funds for the private sector, changing this last argument for the defence of "control" over the destination of public funds. Contradictorily, the document, at the same time that it says that professional education cannot be taken "as a panacea capable of promoting development and generating jobs", states that it is an element for the "implementation of a policy of employment and income" (FÓRUM NACIONAL EM DEFESA DA ESCOLA PÚBLICA, 1997, p.68).

The PNE defends democratic management, stating that the mechanism strengthens civil society, allowing the latter to control political society and fostering citizenship. The problem is that in that historical period, despite having another intentionality, the construction of democratic management was indicated by Capital, since this mechanism contributed to conflict management and political stability. Fontes (2010) points out that FIESP¹¹, in the book *Livre para Crescer* (Free to Grow), published in 1990, dedicated itself in a long and careful manner to the definition of the role of the State and its actions. Among the measures indicated, one of them would be the heavy investment of training in conflict management. The author's reading proposes that "the bourgeois intention of reducing democracy to its managerial aspect was explicit, making it possible to understand its joint action on numerous fronts" (FONTES, 2010, p.263). Thus, in proposing democratic management, there was no blunt criticism of the limits and problems that this proposition entailed.

¹¹ T/N: The Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) is a Brazilian industry entity. FIESP is affiliated with the National Industry Confederation (CNI). FIESP has 52 representative units in the state of São Paulo, representing 133 employer's trade unions and 130,000 industries, The São Paulo industry building is the location of the Center of Industries of the State of São Paulo (CIESP), the Social Service of the Industry of São Paulo (SESI-SP), the National Service for Industrial Training of São Paulo (SENAI-SP), the Roberto Simonsen Institute (IRS) and the headquarters of several affiliated unions.

Another emblematic point of the PNE was the upgrade of school to the role of transformer of society, considering it as a path to end inequalities without making the necessary mediations with the contradictions of capitalist development, since not even a highly educated society is able to end the set of social inequalities and the exploitation of wage labour. Thus, even if in the resolutions of the PNE the main focus was the defence of public and free education, by associating education with economic development and citizenship, the criticism of the private sector was softened, anticipating some of the educational policies that would be implemented by the PT government in the 2000s. These formulations of the PNE are very close to the resolutions and formulations generated within the Workers' Party. Let us observe, in the following, how the resolutions were transformed and assumed part of the liberal ideals in the development of the EDP.

CLAIMS OF THE PARTIDO DOS TRABALHADORES(PT)

The PT administration in the federal government implemented educational policies such as PROUNI¹², the public-private partnerships, the expansion of FIES¹³ and REUNI¹⁴ - policies that could be developed in the 2000s, because they had already been gestated during the FHC government, in the realization of the counter-reform of the State and that are minimally known by those who follow the educational fights. Such policies are palliative, expressive of the class conciliation policy, because, although they have been significant and appreciated by workers (their beneficiaries), these achievements are insignificant when compared to the profits of businessmen obtained through direct and indirect privatization of the educational sector. However, these proposals did not emerge after 2002, when the party took over the presidency of the country. The genesis of many of these proposals can be found both in the party documents and in the set of demands from the education sector, following the transformations that occurred throughout the development and implementation of the EDP. Many of the policies implemented by the federal government had been signaled in resolutions and government programs prior to 2002, representing a collective construction that was not limited to the party itself, although it was the main responsible for being the collective organizer of the class. In its initial documents and resolutions, the party defended public and free education, without ever giving up such flag, however, the way to maintain public and free education has changed. We briefly present the trajectory of the resolutions.

In the document Political Platform (1979), there was the defence of the nationalisation of the companies that provide basic services, among them education. In the same line of thought, the document *Plataforma Eleitoral Nacional: Trabalho, Terra e Liberdade* (1982, p.4), proposes "to put an end to the big business that education has become", indirectly foreseeing the end of the private educational network, which is coherent with the party's line of building a "society without exploited and without exploiters" (PARTIDO DOS TRABALHADORES, 1980, p.1). The criticism of privatization and the growth of the educational market was strong, for example, regarding the exclusivity of the allocation of public funds to the public network, demanding also the prohibition of the allocation of these funds to the private network. By defending democratic management in educational institutions, the PT wanted popular control to foster the construction of a new power, overcoming the division between the governed and the rulers by allowing workers to take political and economic control of the country. In general, in the 1980s, the flags of fight in education were linked to the improvement of living and working conditions of workers, as a democratic right that benefited the popular classes and the accumulation of forces. There was the understanding that the implementation of free, quality, and public education could

¹²T/N: The Programa Universidade para Todos is a programme of the Brazilian Federal Government created with the objective of granting full and partial scholarships for undergraduate courses and specific training courses at private higher education institutions.

¹³ T/N: The Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior is a programme of the Brazilian Ministry of Education, created in 1999, aimed at financing higher education graduation for students enrolled in non-free institutions

¹⁴ T/N: The Programme to Support Plans for the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities is a programme established by the Federal Government of Brazil through Decree 6 096 of 24 April 2007. It sought to expand access and permanence in higher education. The goal was to double the number of students in undergraduate courses in ten years, starting in 2008, and allow the entry of 680 thousand more students in undergraduate courses.

be compatible with the capitalist development in specific situations, however, the evaluation was that the Brazilian bourgeoisie would hardly give in, once this condition would be opposed to the development model adopted in Brazil. Thus, in the Brazilian reality, this struggle would have a great contribution to the construction of socialism.

Until 1989, education, in the PT's formulations, was not seen as a panacea to redeem the country, but as a basic social right that should be treated seriously. In this period, there was a certain overvaluation of the school by indicating that it could awaken and empower in the direction of social transformation. The movements for free public education was intended to change the correlation of forces in society, as it could expand democracy and the participation of workers through the democratization of education and the democratic management of the school. The proposals were quite advanced and expressed the concrete demands of the working class, however, the educational debates were not isolated from the party programme. In the implementation of the EDP, the educational programme also gradually underwent changes¹⁵.

In the 1990s, the PT (Workers' Party) gained more space in the bourgeois institutionality when it assumed city halls, state governments and seats in parliament, when educational problems began to be located in the way the bourgeois state was conducted, that is, the criticism was not of the capitalist system and the need to overcome the class state, but of how to better manage it. The solution, for the PT, would be to build a democratic and popular government that would make the public machine efficient. In the Government Program for the 1994 elections, education became associated with development, growth and citizenship. While maintaining the slogan "free and public education", the party began to call upon the business community to mobilize and construct the Plano Nacional de Educação (National Education Plan), softening criticism of the sector and recognizing private education as a constitutional right.

On the one hand, the defence of public resources for the public network was maintained, on the other hand, the maintenance of programmes such as educational credit and funds to finance professional training with tripartite management was foreseen. A significant change in the 1990s was the presentation of education as a factor of employability and income distribution. Mediating the dispute between public and private, the party's policy for education shifted to the defense of an "education for all" (SILVA, 2017), proposing the articulation between public and private networks in the care of professional education and early childhood education, that is, such partnership was proposed long before the PT reached the federal government.

The combination of education and economic development in the Party became evident in the 2000s, in the reconciliation of the demands of the productive process in the promotion of development and competition in the international market. There was also a retreat in the financing proposal, in such a way that, in the Government Program of 2002, the proposition to invest 7% of the GDP in education appears in a progressive and not immediate way - in the beginning of the 1980s, 12% of the national budget was claimed. In the 2000s, the proposal for education did not aim to meet exclusively the interests of the working class - as it had been in the 1980s - but of the "nation," seeking to reconcile the interests of two antagonistic forces: Capital (by training the workforce that meets its needs) and Labor (by allowing workers access to schooling). Education still assumed the role of favouring the expansion of democracy, but, at this moment, it is also associated with the role of promoting economic development and is seen as capable of solving other social problems.

The transformations that occurred can be evaluated as a downgrading of the programme and/or a betrayal of the leadership; however, it seems to us that before making hasty judgements, it is necessary to remember the strategy that guided the debates. The EDP envisaged the occupation of the administrative spaces of the State by means of electoral dispute. The dispute was seen as a way to build hegemony, but with the electoral race, the need for programmatic moderation and expansion of the range of alliances was imposed - following the democratic "rules of the game" it was not possible to be

¹⁵ It should be noted that these formulations are the fruit of political battles within the Party. Again, we emphasize that these changes did not occur without questioning, but were permeated by many contradictions. Due to the limits of the size of the article, we will only demonstrate the most general changes, without presenting the mediations and without making the dialogue with the changes that occurred in the economic and political environment that contributed to such transformations.

successful without this moderation and expansion, because it sought a "government for all" - at a time when the class mobilisations were losing social strength.

EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC AND POPULAR IDEALS: CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the text, we address some of the scope and limits of the EDP and the general struggles guided by this strategy, also demonstrating how the educational field was organized from the democratic and popular ideology. We indicate the convergence between the productions of educational research, the explicit demands in the PNE (1997), the organization of the FNDEP, and the resolutions of the PT with the democratic and popular ideology. The intention was to highlight that the proposals for the educational policy of the PT, and also that of the movements that fought for public education, followed a movement of opposition to the Capital to its efficient management, following the same movement made by some PT leaders who acted as the "left wing of capital", proposing "another possible capitalism." (COELHO, 2005b, p.141). We hope that the notes may collaborate in the direction of criticism that may contribute to new strategic formulations to guide our struggle banners and tactics, with the aim not only of conquering small improvements, but in the sense of ever changing the social order of Capital.

In this third decade of the 2000s, in addition to the pandemic of the new Coronavirus, which in itself has brutally affected the living and working conditions of the working class, we are also experiencing a conjuncture of withdrawal of rights and disorganization of the class close to that experienced in the 1990s. The rise of a conservative common sense and a federal government with fascist elements may make us revive and reinscribe EDP as our strategic orientation. After all, when conservatives attack the PT they don't want to hit only the Party, the target is the working class, its history of fights and its organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to defend our history and our struggle instruments, keeping us side by side with everyone who stands against the setbacks in education and in the social rights achieved so far. If, on the one hand, we have the need to guarantee "no rights less", on the other, we cannot lack the self-criticism capable of arming us to overcome EDP, considered by us as a controversial and limited strategy. Assuming the presidency of the federal government has promoted the institution of a democracy of co-optation, sterilising the potential of the struggles against pressure and exploitation, making the left increasingly more democratic and less socialist (DANTAS *apud* MARTINS, 2016). The seizure of state power by the proletariat should not be confused with the occupation of the executive of the bourgeois state via democratic elections.

The limit of bourgeois democracy is that even with the full development of democracy and citizenship, class inequalities remain. Thus, occupying executive posts and expanding workers' participation in the different democratic bodies is not enough for human emancipation. In capitalism, the appropriation of surplus labour does not depend on legal or civil status, civil equality does not alter or annul class inequality, this is the limit of democracy in capitalism. In capitalist sociability, political equality can coexist with socioeconomic inequality, since formal equality leaves untouched the economic relations between the bourgeoisie and the workers, even though this too has been the fruit of arduous struggles by the working class. The confusion between socialisation of politics and socialisation of political power promoted by EDP must therefore be overcome.

The socialisation of politics, when limited to citizenship, without socialisation of economic power, does not represent the socialisation of political power. Participation in bourgeois parliaments may serve at certain moments for propaganda and agitation for socialism, but it is not only a question of occupying/conquering the Bourgeois State, but of changing its character, of annihilating it, and, in the course of the transition, this too must be destroyed in order to constitute the self-government of the associated producers (KATAOKA, 2018, p.504).

Thus, democracy (in the abstract), detached from class relations, should not be confused with socialism. Another relevant point is that the expansion of the State, with its different apparatuses, which include the participation of the whole population, has complexified the means of domination. That is, part of the conquests of the workers were beneficial to Capital:

On a more political level, this means that workers' struggles take on multiple dimensions. By extracting effective victories, they tend to impel capital to reinforce the means of adaptation and passivation, resulting in an enormous concentration of resources aimed at producing new consensuses of the subalterns with a view to neutralising their partial victories. By doing this in a formally democratic and parliamentary manner, they modify the conditions of entry for the resumption of class confrontation not only through co-optation, but through the effective cost of maintaining organisations capable of building subaltern unity, such as parties and political campaigns. Counter-hegemony therefore becomes more difficult and arid under the conditions of the dominant order (FONTES, 2012, p.195).

As contradictory as it may seem, the spread of democracy has deepened the conformation to the bourgeois order. For this reason, the struggles within the bourgeois order must simultaneously involve questioning it. Certainly, school education has great importance in enabling the working class, in a generalised way, to have access to historically systematised and accumulated knowledge. We do not deny that the direction of educational policies can also stimulate the process of class organization and contribute to the struggle for access to elaborated knowledge. The problem is located in the expectation that the democratization of education, more precisely school education, can solve the problems of the working class as a whole; after all, in an isolated way education will not be responsible for social progress. Moreover, the working class must also build its autonomous organs of political education beyond the schools under the tutelage of the State. The appropriation of scientific content is a necessary condition in the revolutionary fight, but not sufficient. There are no easy and ready answers about how to organize ourselves for this period of the fight, therefore, this is still a task that we need to face collectively, considering the concrete reality and also the teachings about the paths and trails that the organizations of our class have taken.

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