

On the "freedom of the press" at the « class warfare » front...

On the eve of the subprime crisis, a certain Warren Buffett – head of the Berkshire Hathaway Investment Fund, who now owns the 4th greatest world fortune, and the 2nd greatest U.S. fortune, an amount of about US\$ 58.5 billion, three times Afghanistan's GDP –, said, in a triumphalist and arrogant tone, that

« There is a class war, that's a fact. But it is my class, the class of the rich people, that is leading this war, and we are winning it ».^[1]

But then, the contemporary economic crisis came by, and the arrogant rich people like Buffett are now keeping a low profile in front of their slaves, and even show off their "generosity" by promising that they will bequeath a portion of their wealth to charity upon their death, in order to contribute to the increasing "efforts" and sacrifices that Capital demands from its privileged slaves, who made lots of profits for a long time and must now follow a forced diet.^[2]

And while these "philanthropic" billionaires use such tactics of "social appeasement" to avoid crystallizing against them the growing resentment of the ruined "middle class", they continue filling their pockets. According to Forbes, the fortune of the 400 richest Americans has reached 2,000 billion U.S. dollars in 2013, after having made U.S. \$ 300 billion above the previous year !^[3]

In what the most conscious and organized elements of the monopoly bourgeoisie correctly call the « class war », the written and electronic media play a prominent role. Indeed, as Karl Marx already pointed out so rightly, the class which owns the means of production also owns the main means of communication and information, through which it imposes its ideas to its slaves. The media are therefore one of the main weapons of the bourgeoisie in its ongoing war against the conscious organization of the Labor Front.

In all the developed bourgeois countries, all of the official mainstream media are controlled either directly by media conglomerates or indirectly by the advertising companies, who otherwise would desert them. The powerful Hearst Corporation now controls, only by itself, more than 50 newspapers, 30 TV stations and 300 magazines around the world.^[4]

To say that there is "freedom of press" is, therefore, one of the most shameless lies.^[5]

To illustrate this, let's simply quote an eyewitness of these practices : John Swinton. His testimony, although made almost a century and a half ago, is highly valuable today, because, since then, the influence of Capital on the "free" press not only has diminished, but, on the contrary, it has increased. Addressing his fellow journalists of the *New York Times*, Swinton stated bluntly the following :

« There is no such a thing in America as an independent press, unless it is out in country towns. You are all slaves. You know it, and I know it. There is not one of you who dares to express an honest opinion. If you expressed it, you would know beforehand that it would never appear in print. I am paid \$150 for keeping honest opinions out of the paper I am connected with. Others of you are paid similar salaries for doing similar things. If I should allow honest opinions to be printed in one issue of my paper, I would be like Othello^[6] before twenty-four hours : my occupation would be gone. The man who would be so foolish as to write honest opinions would be out on the street hunting for another job. The business of a New York journalist is to distort the truth, to lie outright, to pervert, to vilify, to fawn at the feet of Mammon^[7], and to sell his country and his race for his daily bread, or for what is about the same — his salary. You know this, and I know it ; and what foolery to be toasting an "Independent Press"! We are the tools and vassals of rich men behind the scenes. We are jumping-jacks. They pull the string and we dance. Our time, our talents, our lives, our possibilities, are all the property of other men. We are intellectual prostitutes ».^[8]

Such lucidity and honesty in a speech were still possible at that time, when the war between Labor and Capital had not yet resulted in large-scale battles. For the ruling classes, particularly in the U.S., the communist threat was still in its infancy then, it was distant and even hypothetical. Today, such an admission would be unthinkable, since the relative social peace which the bourgeoisie still enjoys is largely guaranteed by the formidable machinery of deception and degradation of the exploited masses that the "free" media constitute.

A recent example of this was the gigantic campaign of mystification surrounding the French imperialist intervention in Central Africa, or, more precisely, in "Françafrique" (French Africa), a name due to a Freudian slip made by Bernard Kouchner on January 2 on *BFM-TV*. All of the official media have sworn that France had no economic interest to defend in the region, and that it was acting there as a "gendarme" only for "humanitarian" reasons. In fact, the fear of monopolies such as Areva, Total and Bolloré of losing the control over the gold, diamond, oil and uranium deposits contained in the rich subsoil of the country, is the real reason behind this new colonial interference of our imperialism, the latest of the innumerable interferences that have only led to the exacerbation of ethnic and religious conflicts.

Thus, it is only in the Web that one can find alternative media that are not silenced by Capital. ^[9] But how long will the capitalist system tolerate the existence of this last area of public freedom of expression still accessible to the broad exploited masses ?

Until the day the slaves of Capital will massively reject totally the official media, the day where the industry of intoxication with false news will have lost most of its hold on them. The vacillating bourgeois order will then drop its "democratic" mask and brutally repress anything that will threaten its foundation, which is wage slavery !

Text by Vincent Gouysse, for the Organisation des Communistes de France (Organization of the Communists of France), January 08, 2014 – Translation by Communist Reconstruction Canada.

FOOTNOTES : [1] Source : « In class warfare, guess which class is winning », *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 2006 • [2] Onze milliardaires cèdent la moitié de leur fortune, *Le Figaro.fr*, Sept. 19, 2012 • [3] Inside The 2013 Forbes 400 : Facts And Figures On America's Richest, *Forbes.com*, Sept. 16, 2013 • [4] Source : <http://www.hearst.com> • [5] « Les classes sociales sous l'impérialisme », Vincent Gouysse, pages 52-56 • [6] Personification of material richness and greed in the New Testament • [7] Hero of the eponymous tragedy by William Shakespeare. In this play, the character is reduced to suicide • [8] Speech by John Swinton, editor of the *New York Times*, before his journalists at the dinner organized on the occasion of his departure from the newspaper in 1870. Source of English text : http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Swinton • [9] As *Agora Vox*, *Alterinfo* and *Réseau Voltaire*.