

## **Notebook 9: Methodological Conclusions and Other Definitions of Coyuntural Analysis**

### GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE SERIES

This material that you have in your hands is the product of a practice and reflection of many years of work. As a product of this process, we in SIPRO arrived to this systemization with the contribution of many people and with the valuable collaboration of Enrique Valencia who made the basic text of this edition possible. From his document we try to be loyal to the methodological process he plants in a difficult theme, but essential for those who carry out a labor of education and accompaniment to social processes and the reality of our country.

These materials are aimed at contributing to all of those people from the ngo's, promoters, advisors, students, professionals, educators who accompany processes of popular education and of social organizations, and for those intellectuals who produce coyuntural analysis.

The notebooks we present here are a basic text, a contribution that does not signify the last word over this subject. There is a lot still to be said, proposed, and written over it. For many, the approaches and concepts can be debatable, questionable and anachronistic. We are in agreement over that and that is what it is about: generate a reflection and understanding that begins to find new roads and horizons in this galloping reality.

The content of these notebooks can be used in multiple forms depending on the interest. It can easily be part of an extensive course, used for a more deep and focused discussion on the theme, or it can be used as a tool for consulting. It does exempt its readers from the task of going into depth, questioning, criticizing, connecting, proposing changes and even less so of the challenge of sharing in a more accessible way if the theme is deeply comprehended. This would be the central objective of our proposal.

In the face of the disordered reality in which we live, we see the necessity of stopping to analyze it with the objective of accompanying the historical process of change and be participants of it. That is why in *Servicios Informativos Procesados, A.C.*, we revisit this document and we retransmit it for those actors who want to be an active part of their own history.

We hope that the systemization of these notebooks can be a modest contribution and useful for the best development of the analysis of coyuntura.

Gustavo E. Castro Soto

## Part 2: Definitions of Coyuntural Analysis

(p 27)

1. Alberto Arroyo and Ignacio Medina.

"The coyuntural analysis looks to analyze the current correlation of forces in order to intervene in the daily class struggle; it tries to determine which is the principle contradiction of each moment and which is its principle aspect; it also looks to discover the secondary contradictions within the dominant classes in order to take advantage of them; in a few words, it looks to know the current strength of the groups in struggle, the battlefield and with that plan the transforming action of the situation."<sup>1</sup>

"In other words: the coyuntural analysis tries to determine not just the general logic of a concrete social formation (the work of structural analysis), but also to clarify the concrete moment of the class struggle (...). The coyuntural analysis is fundamentally a political analysis."<sup>2</sup>

(p. 28)

2. Osorio, Jaime.

The 'stadium' of the coyuntura

"It is the level closest to the concrete reality for which it refers to the multiplicity of elements that this contains. It differentiates itself from the previous stadiums (that is to say, from the 'mode of production', the 'world system', and the 'economic social formation') successively because the time-frame with which it concerns itself is always current. It supports itself in the past, but in order to comprehend the present."<sup>3</sup>

"The central force of coyuntural analysis is to be able to establish a synthesis of that complex gamut of situations that the reality presents."

"One should ask oneself, what is the criteria that permits one to establish that synthesis in the coyuntura?"

"The measuring of the correlation of social forces, of the elements that determine it and of the instruments used by diverse classes and fractions in order to meet in it, makes up the c=factor that permits the ordering of the chaos, atomization and multiplicity of objects and processes that present us with the reality at the level of coyuntura."<sup>4</sup>

"Politics, indicates Lenin, is the concentrated expression of the economy. The conduct of the classes in the diverse planes of society concentrates in 'the political', in its capacity to carry forward its political objectives. It is for this reason that in the coyuntural analysis, the multiple projects and actions of the classes should be synthesized in the notion of accumulated strength in

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<sup>1</sup> Arroyo, Alberto and Medina, Ignacio, "Metodología del Análisis Coyuntural" in *Cristus*, May 1977, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Osorio, Jaime, 1987: 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 49-50.

the political field, that is to say, as much in the capacity to exercise power, as to fall into it, or to constitute itself in power.”

“From this perspective, the coyuntura studies are the fundamental studies in order to operate on the reality to ‘make politics’.”

This idea refers to us a key point: the study of reality from marxism and in particular, the studies of coyuntura are not just an analysis to measure the correlation of forces, but rather fundamentally efforts of apprehension of the reality the the aim of modifying the correlation of forces.”<sup>5</sup>

(p. 30)

3. Gallardo, Helio.

“... the coyuntural analysis rests in an understanding, in concepts that permit a diagnostic of the current situation, of the real, ad especially, a diagnostic of the current situation of forces in the political stage in a wide sense.”<sup>6</sup>

"The coyuntural analysis, then, is a diagnostic of the current situation of social forces with views to to grasp the tendencies and possibilities of its development and change, and also, it is an evaluation of our relative strength, of our position, and of our capacity to influence in this correlation of forces in order to advance en them the force of the people, the revolutionary organizations and forces."

"The coyuntural analysis determines the current situation of political forces in an economic-social formation and its possibilities of development, increasing or weakening, from the current situation."<sup>7</sup>

(p. 31)

"The coyuntural analysis concnetrates itself in this last space (that is to say, the 'political'): but this space is function and has 'effects' in the structure of the political, and the structure of the political is function and has 'effects' over the system of domination in the wide sense (economic-social regions, an dideology of the economic-social formation)."<sup>8</sup>

"When we say that the coyuntural analysis is not given in a vacuum, we signal that it expresses the current moment of the dominant mode of production structured by specific historical conditions (...)."<sup>9</sup>

"the notion of coyuntura can be understood in a wide sense, as dynamic representation of the 'general state of things', and in a specific sense, as analysis of the current correlation of forces, or as the diagnostic representation of the the current situation of class struggle in the political."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid 51.

<sup>6</sup> Gallardo, Helio, 1988: 23.

<sup>7</sup> ibid: 34.

<sup>8</sup> ibid: 55

<sup>9</sup> ibid: 64

"The coyuntural analysis proposes as object of comprehension the manifestation of the current strength of the classes in the political stage understood as a field of confrontation and alliance. the manifestation of the current strength of the classes in the political stage can be explicitly linked more or less organically to a political project materialized by objective actions or formalized in a program."<sup>11</sup>

(p. 32)

"The coyuntural analysis occupies itself in the particularity of the situational plane."<sup>12</sup>

"The coyuntural analysis aspires, as such, to contribute to the creation of coyunturas more favorable for activation, organization and mobilization of the people."<sup>13</sup>

"The specific objective of coyuntural analysis are the correlation of social forces as they express themselves in the instance or political level of an economic-social formation."

"The social forces are understood here as the expression of the social classes in the political level. The study and understanding of the expressions of class struggle in the economic-social and cultural levels are conditions for the coyuntural analysis, but do not constitute its specific objective."<sup>14</sup>

(p. 33)

The author distinguishes several levels for the analysis of a social formation:

the mode of production

the social structure

(co-existence of social forms belonging to diverse modes of production)

the social situation

(the 'empirical countable' history, the classes express themselves as groups of differentiated persons)

the coyuntural analysis

(the groups articulate themselves with respect to the 'current historical presence of the tendencies that make up a determined social formation'; it is possible to understand the history configured by pre-revolutionary periods, revolutionary periods, and periods of relative stability.)<sup>15</sup>

(p 34)

4. Gimenez, Gilberto.

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<sup>10</sup> ibid: 69

<sup>11</sup> ibid: 80

<sup>12</sup> ibid: 83

<sup>13</sup> ibid: 84.

<sup>14</sup> ibid: 96

<sup>15</sup> ibid: 58-69

For the author one can trace struggles and correlations of forces in the economic , political, and ideological-cultural planes.<sup>16</sup>

He defines ‘critical coyuntura’ or simply ‘coyuntura’ in the following manner:

“a significant displacement of the correlation of social forces in the short term, at root of an unchaining event that frequently serves as the revealer of the contradictions up to that point dormant.”<sup>17</sup>

He puts forward the possibility of applying elements of discursive analysis to the analysis of the ‘relations of forces’.<sup>18</sup>

“The actancial model of Greimas, for example, [trans. Note: see <http://www.univ-perp.fr/see/rch/lts/MARTY/preg35.htm> ] permits one to detect with greater precision the system of social actors confronted in the political stage, their strategic and coyuntural objectives, and their current and virtual allies and opponents. One could even define semiotically a critical conjuncture as a convergence of claims (the *quête* of Greimas) of different social actors over the same object (the object-value of Greimas) in the same place and time. Or as the collision of unreconcilable projects of different social actors in the same place and time.”<sup>19</sup>

(p. 35)

5. Zemelman, Hugo.

In the context of a fundamentally epistemological book, the author presents us with the following ideas about coyuntura analysis:

“The idea of movement expresses itself in the ‘given-potential’ or the ‘structure-coyuntura’, that constitutes angles for the analysis of the reality as present as it contains the possibility of a deviation.”<sup>20</sup>

“The distinction between the given-potential and the structure-coyuntura rests in the idea of history as a construction, which obliges one to understand it as a sequence of coyunturas that signify moments of insertion of the practices-projects of different social subjects.”<sup>21</sup>

“... the practice makes up an incorporation of the future, not as a prediction, but rather as potential possibility. The potentiality alludes to the practice, while the possible relates with the understanding of the real.”<sup>22</sup>

(p. 36)

“The idea of praxis relates to the knowledge of the problem of historical viability. In the framework of this relation, the coyuntura makes up a cut in the time that serves as a reference in

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<sup>16</sup> Gimenez, Gilberto, 1981: 224-25

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*: 25 and 135, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*: 136

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*: 136

<sup>20</sup> Zemelman, Hugo, 1987, 1987a: 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*: 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*: 27.

order to construct knowledge from the 'make up' of objectivity; from here the coyuntura represents a measurement between the accumulated knowledge of theoretical structures and the alternative of praxis suitable for the occupation of an option defined as possible."<sup>23</sup>

"The coyuntura is a moment of the potentiality and, as such, the moment in which the totality rests principally in the determination of the superstructure (in the sense of which it is the superstructure which determines that that potentiality takes a direction of development); for the same reason, it is the moment of coexistence of all the unrevealed possibilities. In this line, the coyuntura is a moment of the structuration itself; it is not the given totality but rather its process of constitution. Nevertheless, as structuration it can only be known over the base of a certain permanence, it supposes that one has to conceive of the processes as a sequence of coyunturas, each one of which can be considered as an 'inconclusive' totality."<sup>24</sup>

(p. 37)

6. Delich, Francisco.

In a very brief article about the premises of coyuntural analysis, the author presents the following definition of P. Vilar and comments about it:

"Pierre Vilar sustains the 'in the most general sense, the coyuntura is the whole of conjugated conditions that characterize a moment in the global movement of historical material. It takes on in this sense all the conditions, as much psychological, political, or social as economic or meteorological'. But this moment is not any moment, but rather that which we privilege, that we define as object or better yet that we construct as such."<sup>25</sup>

After this clarification and with the interest in fundamentally studying the 'gray coyunturas' (as opposed to the 'revolutionary' or exceptional ones), the author presents four basic premises for the analysis of coyuntura:

(p. 38)

a. "there is no difference between the elements that are joined in an analytical model for macro-historical and synchronistic long-term analysis and those which make up a micro-historical diachronistic short-term model."

"The only substantial difference refers to the quantitative and qualitative pondering of all or each one of the disaggregated components."<sup>26</sup>

b. "The second premise, rather obvious but extremely important: given that it tries to analyze concrete social phenomena, the level of analysis cannot be other than that of historical formations (...)"

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 28.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 40-41.

<sup>25</sup> Delich, Francisco, 1979: 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid: 16

c. “A third premise. The coyuntura is always a mode of articulation. One should say a particular mode of articulation (...)

d. “A fourth and last premise: a coyuntural analysis is only possible if the emphasis displace itself from the causes of the conditions, although obviously one cannot abstract those.”<sup>27</sup>

When one refers to the articulations the author thinks of the analysis of class fractions, but not only in them.

(p. 39)

7. Lopez, Sinesio.

In a presentation of coyuntural analysis in classis socialist thought and with a focus in the study of the ‘revolutionary coyunturas’, the author presents the following definitions:

“The decisive and original contribution of Marx and of Lenin to politics is to have achieved in every moment the articulation between the concrete analysis of the concrete situation with the tasks and the tactics from the point of view and from the interests of the class creating the new history.”<sup>28</sup>

“Lenin demands that the analysis of the concrete situation and the establishment of tactics have maximum scientific rigor.’Marxism demands of us a strictly exact and objectively verifiable analysis of class relations and the traits belonging to each historical moment’ (...)”

“Lenin deduces the apparent simplicity of a watch-word, the previously mentioned articulation (articulation of the analysis of the current moment, the tasks and the tactics) in all of its richness and complexity. For this reason, we define along with Debray the analysis of coyuntura as ‘the science of the watch-word [consigna?]’”<sup>29</sup>

(p. 40)

“Engels, in the prologue to the third German edition of the eighteenth Brumaire, defined the coyuntural analysis done by Marx as ‘an eminent way of comprehending the live history of a moment and as ‘a deep penetration into the events at the same time that they produce themselves’ (...)”

“The present state of things, in order to be understood, has to be transformed in the current moment. The instrument for this transformation is the application ‘of the great law that rules the march of history’: the analysis of social classes in their diverse fields of struggle.”<sup>30</sup>

“Its unity and its homogeneity (of the events of the present state) newly depend on a determined relation of forces between the social classes in a given moment: a determined system of class contradictions that highlight a principle contradiction, a particular form of the correlation of forces linked to this system of contradictions, the class character of the force that commands the

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid*: 18

<sup>28</sup> Lopez, Sinesio, 1979: 24.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*: 27.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*: 30.

correlation of forces and the specific forms of confrontation between the forces as a model to resolve the class contradictions are fundamental elements that define the unity and the homogeneity of the current moment.”<sup>31</sup>

(p. 41)

“The current moment, nevertheless, presents a major richness of content because in it one plots the two logics: the general logic of the epoch and the specific logic of the current moment, whose combination is recued by the marxist method.”<sup>32</sup>

“As a condensation of the society in a determined moment, the current moment is the most developed and complex expression of the political reality. Parallely, the coyuntural analysis is the most complex elaboration of the political analysis.”<sup>33</sup>

“The particularity of the revolutionary coyuntura consists in that it is a point of abrupt switch in the history of a determined society.”<sup>34</sup>

The author also presents diverse characteristics of a revolutionary coyuntura.

(p. 42)

8. Portantiero, Juan Carlos.

In a study about the coyuntural analysis in Gramsci, the author presents us the following conclusions:

“The coyuntural analysis is not another thing, in Gramsci, than the examination of a face of contradictory relations (relations of forces), in whose particular combination a level of them –the ‘economic ones’- operate as a limit of variation, ‘or they permit one to control the level of realism and possibilities in the carrying out of diverse ideologies that were born (...) in the terrain of the contradictions that generated during their development.”<sup>35</sup>

“The coyuntural analysis –in his language, the analysis of ‘the situations’ (Mach. 67)-as junction of specific temporalities, as result of the unequal level of development of the distinct ‘relations of forces’ is the analysis, in the interior of the ‘event’ of the limits set by the pieces of information of the ‘structure’ combined with the specific effectiveness with which it acts –as acceleration or as block- the complex articulation of the ‘superstructures’”<sup>36</sup>

“But the analysis of a coyuntura in the interior of the hegemonic system supposes one more step: to determine the specific level of (unequal) development of the relations of forces in the distinct levels that make up the social totality (...)”

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid: 31.

<sup>32</sup> ibid: 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid: 42

<sup>34</sup> ibid: 42

<sup>35</sup> Portantiero, Juan Carlos, 1981:178

<sup>36</sup> ibid: 181

(p. 43)

“It is there where the distinction between the diverse moments or levels of the same moments appears:

**1. relation of social forces** ⇒ (referred to the concept of structure: relations of production; social groups)

**2. relations of political forces** ⇒ (homogeneity and organization of the groups), that can be divided into levels: economic-corporative, economic-social and political.”<sup>37</sup>

“But it is from the national social relations that one should undertake the analysis.”<sup>38</sup>

“A coyuntural analysis, in Gramsci, is equal to the possibility of formulating a ‘forecast’. If it is possible to present a methodological canon in order to go deeply into the same (and Gramsci does it) it is a condition to consider the situations as a relation between forces, as a product of social actors that oppose each other and articulate among themselves and who possess distinct levels of organization and cohesion.”<sup>39</sup>

(p. 44)

9. Luengo, Enrique.

Even though he doesn’t put forward a definition in the strict sense, we can extract from his text the following elements. One should note that the work of E. Luengo over coyuntural analysis falls within a wider text about the methodological problems in social sciences.<sup>40</sup>

“The central objective, over which rotates all coyuntural analysis, is that of the relations of forces in the class struggle. That is to say, the coyuntural analysis implies an analysis of the social classes, of the class fractions, of the alliances that are established between distinct groups and of the modification of the relations between different classes and social forces.

For the study of these antagonistic and contradictory relations, one has to also take into account the form in which the classes are defined at the economic level and the apparatus in which they support themselves in order to establish consensus, or in their case, coercion.”<sup>41</sup>

“(…) it is not an analysis of the economic situation in and of itself, but rather a study of the political coyuntura, which obviously should take into account the first aspect.”

“Nevertheless, one cannot understand as ‘political space’ only the confrontation between classes that occurs at the State level, as Marx takes care to distinguish ‘the confrontation at the level of the State from the conflict of civil society even though they meet and combine rapidly’.”

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid*: 188

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*: 188

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*: 190-191

<sup>40</sup> Luengo, Enrique: pages 268-303.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*: 276

“In this sense, Gramsci would affirm that the institutions of civil society –understood as the church, school, unions, political parties, etc.- are the ‘scene of the political struggle of classes.’”<sup>42</sup>

According to the author in all coyuntural analysis one takes into account the economic, political, military and ideological levels. Therefore ‘the emphasis put on the political in coyuntural analysis does not mean that it only appears on this level.’<sup>43</sup>

In addition, it is an ‘analysis of short historic periods’; however, there are three ways in which this temporal length is given:

- ‘current moment of the class struggle
- ‘the form how a modification is produced in the relation that is given between different classes and social forces’ and
- ‘a historic epoch’ or a long lasting period.

(p. 46)

“(…) it is not easy to resolve the problem of temporal limits of the coyuntura theoretically or empirically. Nevertheless, the problem of periodization resolves itself, seemingly to us, through the theoretical and conceptual framework of the researcher, as such, for the practical interest of the class for which that research is done (here again is the political dimension of coyuntural analysis).”<sup>44</sup>

With respect to the spatial unit, the author indicates:

“In other words, it is possible to carry out a coyuntural analysis in aggregates smaller than the nation-state as long as the fragment is sufficiently broad and one knows its relations with other parts of society.”<sup>45</sup>

(p. 47)

In the relations and differences between coyuntural analysis and structural analysis, Luengo says:

“So, the conjunctural movements depend on the structural movements. That is to say, the conjuncture is already becoming a determined moment in the state of the structure. Generally, as we already said, one prefers to make a conjunctural study in times of crisis, for this one needs to correctly observe its manifestation, as this can be a crisis of renovation, of stagnation or of retreat of the structure.”

“To understand conjunctural analysis as a symptom of the structure permits one to measure the relations of forces and to mark the direction of the class struggle.”

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid*: 277-278.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*: 277-278.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*: 281-282.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*: 290-291.

“From the structural analysis, or that is to say, from the character of an epoch, one cannot deduce ‘the peculiar character of the current moment. This can only be deduced from concrete analysis of a concrete situation.’ (Siinesio López)”<sup>46</sup>

(p 48)

10. Souza, Herbert Jose de.

The author does not give us a definition of conjunctural analysis, nevertheless we can extract the following elements:

“To carry out conjunctural analysis some tools are needed. The categories that are used are

- Events
- Stages
- Actors
- Relations of Forces
- Articulation (relation) between ‘structure’ and ‘conjuncture’.”<sup>47</sup>

(p. 49)

With regards to the events:

“In a conjunctural analysis the important is to analyze the events (that is to say, the facts that acquire a special sense for a country, a social class, a social group or a person) knowing how to distinguish first the facts of the events and then distinguishing the events according to their importance. The weight and importance of the events are always relative and depend on the optic of who analyzes the conjuncture (...).

“To identify the principal events a a determined moment, or during a period, is a fundamental step in order to characterize and analyze a conjuncture”.<sup>48</sup>

With regards to the **stages**:

“The actions of a social and political branch develop in determined spaces that can be considered like stages”.<sup>49</sup>

(p. 50)

With regards to the **relations of of forces**:

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 298

<sup>47</sup> Souza, Herbert Jose de, “Cómo se hace análisis de coyuntura” IBASE, Trad. Comisión Poular ORPC, Botafógo, no date, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 6 In the parenthesis we retake the definition put forth by Souza.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 7

“The social classes, the groups, the different social actors are in relations some with others. These relations can be of confrontation, of coexistence, of cooperation and will always be revealing a relation of force, of domination, of equality or of subordination. To find ways to verify this relation of forces, to have a clearer idea of that relation is decisive if one wants to obtain practical conclusions from the conjunctural analysis”.<sup>50</sup>

The author proposes **two types of conjunctural analysis**:

“There exist two possible readings of the events or two modes of reading a conjuncture:

“- from the situation or point of view of the dominant power (the logic of power);

“- from the situation or point of view of the popular social movements, the subordinant classes, from the opposition to the dominant power”.<sup>51</sup>

(page 51)

“The conjunctural analysis of a general mode is an analysis interested in producing a type of intervention in politics; it is a fundamental element in the organization of politics, in the definition of strategies and tactics of the diverse social forces in struggle”.<sup>52</sup>

“We could define strategy as the articulation, the definition of a group of means, of forces, of elements that pursue the realization of general objectives or a more global ‘project’ that responds to the social, economic and political interests and objectives of determined forces or social classes.

“If in the strategy we observe the most general objectives and lines of action, in tactics we observe the particular means and forms, concrete actions, that pursue the realization of determined strategies”.<sup>53</sup>

(page 52)

Finally, de Souza highlights these **two additional elements**:

**A** “An important aspect of conjunctural analysis is that of characterizing the central questions that are present in the evidence of the social and political struggle of a determined period. These questions are part of the debate of political parties, of unions, of social movements in general and are reflected in the press”.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 33

**B** “Another aspect to be considered in a conjunctural analysis is the identification of the camps of confrontation that exist in a determined moment, that characterize the types of opposition and the conflicts between the different social actors. The identification of the camps of confrontation is important, also, for the analysis of the correlation of forces because the focus is basically that of the conflict”.<sup>55</sup>

(page 53)

11. Ruiz, Eliseo and Sanchez, Irene.

To begin the authors define that which is a “**conjuncture**”:

“In the same way, in every social formation there exist moments in which the conjunction of some or all the factors –as much internal as external- that make it up have bearing on its development. When we speak of conjuncture we refer, therefore, to these situations that occur in a determined historical moment and that give footing to the significant political, economic and social readaptations”.<sup>56</sup>

“In the same way that a conjuncture is expressing wide-ranging social contradictions, it is also characterized by the presence of a determined correlation of social and political forces. The concept of correlation of forces makes reference to the principal contradiction that is given in all societies divided into classes: that which exists among those who hold the political, economic and ideological power of a society, against those over whom this power is exercised (...)”.

(page 54)

“In other words, the correlation of forces is the comparison of the political strength and the capacity to control between social classes or their political representatives”.<sup>57</sup>

“It is important, on the other hand, to have clear that a transcending event is not necessarily a conjunctural moment. It could happen, for example, that a large strike movement that ends successfully for the workers does not substantially modify the balance of forces between classes”.<sup>58</sup>

“To speak, therefore, of the ‘current conjuncture’ we are referring to the situation in which a given society is living in at the present moment, characterized by a certain correlation of forces”.<sup>59</sup>

Later the authors define **two types of conjuncture: the simple and the complex.**

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 36

<sup>56</sup> Ruiz, Eliseo and Irene Sánchez. “Elementos para el análisis y seguimiento de una coyuntura”, in Cuadernos de Educación Popular, No. 6, CEE, México, 1988, p. 13

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 13-14

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 15

In reference to the **relation between the concept of social formation and that of conjuncture**, they present the following aspects:

“In the first place it is necessary to take into account that in every social formation there exists at least three structural levels: the economic, political, and ideological levels. The study of a conjuncture should integrate the examination of these levels independently if in that moment only one of them predominates”.

“Now, the three levels that make up the social formation have a concrete way of expressing themselves in the conjuncture. In this case two elements are present that make up such a concrete situation: the objective and subjective factors”.<sup>60</sup>

It is important, additionally, to observe how the authors define the objective as well as the subjective.

In this context, they go on to define **conjunctural analysis**:

“A conjunctural analysis serves fundamentally to have sufficient elements that allow us to anticipate the immediate evolution of a social process in the framework of its tendency to develop long-term. For that, one cannot end up in a mere description that only serves to know the current situation and nothing else”.<sup>61</sup>

(page 56)

“Beyond an intellectual exercise, its utility lies in –once the analysis has been made- being able to make political decisions and to orientate action in order to affect the behavior of the process”.<sup>62</sup>

“(…) the conjunctural analysis refers to the study of a social situation”.<sup>63</sup>

They characterize two types of situations: Those of relative stability and the revolutionary or national crisis situations.

“In one or another social situation, the conjunctural analysis concludes in a balance of the correlation of forces”.<sup>64</sup>

“(…) all balance should distinguish which is the dominant level of a conjuncture, that is to say, in which of those levels does the principal contradiction manifest itself”.<sup>65</sup>

(page 57)

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 17-18

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 25

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 26

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 27

The authors distinguish “objective elements”:

- *In a situation of relative stability*: Regional and international situation, ideological, political and social situation (employment, housing, etc.) and economic situation.
- *In a crisis situation*: Political crisis (secondary contradictions). Social crisis (primary contradiction) and economic crisis (fundamental crisis).

The “subjective elements” refer to the level of organization and consciousness of the internal social forces, to the external imperialist politics (overdetermining factor), to international solidarity and to other external factors (processes of diplomatic convergence, etc.).

Later the authors present a series of basic concepts for conjunctural analysis. They include conjunctural and structural **hypotheses, tendencies, variables and indicators**.<sup>66</sup>

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12. Zarco, Carlos

In the definition about conjunctural analysis, the author follows the concept expressed in the work of Alberto Arroyo and Ignacio Medina.<sup>67</sup>

He defines the concept of **conjuncture** in the following way:

“We call like this the contradictions of events of a determined moment of the social process. These events influence the social structure, sometimes in a minimal way and sometimes strongly, letting the fundamental contradictions be seen. They are moments that also can signify the possible advance or retreat of the popular movement and the groups in power”.<sup>68</sup>

He distinguishes out of the principal concepts of analysis the following:

- “principal facts”
- “principal or fundamental contradiction”
- “causes and consequences” of the contradiction
- “social actors”
- “projects”
- “correlation of forces”
- “program of struggle or lines of action”

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 37-41

<sup>67</sup> Zarco, Carlos, “Elementos para el Análisis de la Realidad”, in Cuadernos de Educación Popular, No. 6, CEE, México, 1988, p. 62

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p. 71

“By analyzing a determined situation or moment of development in the class struggle we find ourselves in the conjuncture. From that conjuncture we are interested in the principal facts, not everything that happens, just the most relevant facts and details. In order to order these facts we have to locate them in the various levels of society, and interrelation them within the context in which they are given. Thus we will obtain a picture that will help us in the reading of the events”.<sup>69</sup>

He indicates five levels: economic, political, military, ideological and religious.

“(…) we go on to identify the principal contradiction that is lived in the moment, that is to say, that situation or fact that is the motive of conflict and antagonism between the various social forces of our region or locality and that, in that moment, expresses the principal contradiction”.<sup>70</sup>

“In our reality there are multiple contradictions, but one has to identify the fundamental one”.<sup>71</sup>

C. Zarco proposes **a step of identification of the projects and of the correlation of forces**. He indicates:

“This is a step that demands a deeper reflection, since it deals with the making of a type of radiography of the social actors, in such a way that we could discover the projects that support them.”

(…)

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“By using here the word project we do not refer to a structured or well worked-out program, but rather to the intentionality of the actions that develop and to the interests that defend themselves”.<sup>72</sup>

“The correlation of forces is a type of measure of the class struggle that is lived daily. One tries to know, in a determined conjuncture, who has more opportunities to win in that class struggle: the people or the oppressors.”

(…)

“Another aspect upon analyzing the correlation of forces is the identification of the most adequate opportunities to act upon and of the weaknesses as much of the enemy as of the popular group”.<sup>73</sup>

“The great task is to constitute a popular historical subject with its respective alternative project. The conjunctural analysis is an instrument in this great effort”.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 82

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 93

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 94

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 98

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 100-101

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13. Ruiz Sahagun, Carlos.

“Of this objective form a CONJUNCTURAL ANALYSIS is:

- a. “To recuperate the correlation of forces in a moment or social situation generated by an event.”
- b. “To reconstitute the social and institutional practices in the way that they were given in a given moment and according to their logic of production.”
- c. “To recuperate the strategy and the tactics of the social actors, in the breast of a society or of an institution in order to determine the blocks of power that are being formed.”
- d. “To show the presence or hiding of the deep contradiction of a society or an institution.”
- e. “To relate the conjunctural moments with the deep movement of the social structures or institutions”.<sup>75</sup>

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“A conjunctural analysis of a social or institutional level in an analysis of a political stage in which there are:”

“Protagonists: those who make possible that the objectives that result triumphant are reached in a given conjunctural moment.”

“Helpers: those actors who collaborate with the protagonist in order that the protagonist reaches the objectives of its actions.”

“Opposers: those actors who are contrary to the objectives of the protagonist and who do not want that the protagonist reaches its task, even though they do not reach their own objectives”.

“Target Group: those actors who should receive the benefits of the action of the protagonist”.

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“Situation: the political-social, economic, education-cultural, etc. characteristics also play a role, because the help or get in the way of the protagonist or its opposers”.

“Practical mechanisms of institutional and technological types: they are the aids or instruments of all types that the actors use to carry out in practice their proposals”.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p, 104

<sup>75</sup> Ruiz Sahagun, Carlos, Análisis de Coyuntura, mimeograph, Guadalajara, 1984, p. 3

“The Project: It is the needs/desires (interests) that stand out and mobilize the actions. It comes out of something that one does not have and wants to acquire. It is almost never declared, but rather is hidden within the strategic questions or is even unconscious. It appears as implicit interests”.<sup>76</sup>

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## QUESTIONS

1. What new elements have you found in these definitions? Which question or enrich that proposed in the notebooks?
2. What new elements would you incorporate and do you consider should be taken into account? Why?
3. Do you have another methodological proposal to approach this theme of conjunctural analysis?
4. What gaps or deficiencies do you consider these notebooks have? Why?
5. Were the sequential layout, the contents, the language, and the examples proposed clear? What would you modify?
6. With the study of these notebooks, do you think that you could explain them or pass on their contents to others?

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 2