

SOCIALISM RE-AFFIRMED.

We here outline certain ideas which might form a basis for a regroupment of revolutionary socialists.

None of the traditional working class organizations express the interests of the class. Their degeneration and bureaucratisation have been accompanied by a profound decay of socialist theory, of concepts of struggle and organization and even of fundamental notions concerning the nature of socialism. Agreement must be reached on what socialism is, if revolutionary practice is genuinely to assist the working class and is not to result in further confusion and demoralisation. The following points are, in our opinion, quite basic:

(1) 'The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority.' Some of the 'revolutionary' tendencies pay lip-service to this idea. None take it seriously, or even seem to understand its implications. 'Self-conscious' implies that the class itself must understand the full significance of its actions. 'Independent' implies that the class itself must decide the objectives and methods of its struggle.

(2) 'The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves.' The working class cannot entrust its historical task to anyone else. No 'saviours from on high' will free it. The class will never achieve power, its power, if it entrusts the revolutionary struggle to others. Mass socialist consciousness and mass participation are essential. The revolutionary organization must assist in their development and must ruthlessly expose all illusions that the problem can be solved in any other way.

Moreover the working class will never hold power unless it is prepared consciously and permanently to mobilise itself to this end. All previous attempts by the working class to delegate power to specific groups, in the hope that such groups would exert power 'on its behalf' have resulted in the formation of bureaucracies and in the economic and political expropriation of the working class. ~~Socialism, unlike all previous forms of social organization, requires the constant, conscious and permanent participation of the great majority.~~

(3) The fundamental aspect of all class society is that a specific social group assumes a dominant position in the relations of production. In this position it firstly 'disposes of the conditions of production' (i.e. organizes and manages production) and secondly determines the distribution of the total social product. Individual ownership of the means of production is but one of several possible ways in which a ruling class can legitimise its domination.

Every ruling class strives to perpetuate its privileged status in society through its control of the instruments of coercion, i.e. the State machine. No ruling class in history has ever surrendered its dominant position in the economy and its control of the State without a ferocious struggle.

(4) The fundamental contradiction of contemporary society is its division into those who own, manage, decide and direct, and the majority who, because they are deprived of access to the means of production, have to toil and are forced to comply with decisions they have not themselves taken. This contradiction is the basis of alienation, of the class struggle and of the deep going crises which affect both bourgeois and bureaucratic societies.

The objective of the class struggle is to ensure, through the revolutionary accession to power of the working class, the abolition of all antagonistic divisions within society and of all the limitations these divisions impose upon men's lives.

(5) By its everyday struggle in capitalist society, the working class develops a consciousness which has an essentially socialist content. The class struggle is not only a struggle for surplus value (as 'vulgar' marxists would have us believe). It is also a struggle for completely different conditions of existence. This struggle takes place at the point of production, where it challenges both bourgeois and bureaucratic prerogatives of management.

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It is in the factory and the workshop that the workers counterpose their wishes and aspirations to the bureaucratic decisions of the bosses, and attempt to assert their own forms of organization against those imposed upon them from above. This aspect of the class struggle has the most profoundly revolutionary implications, for who manages production manages, in the last analysis, society itself. The revolutionary organization must stress, in its agitation and propaganda, this particular aspect of the working class struggle and underline its fundamentally socialist content.

(6) The working class has repeatedly attempted to solve the basic question of its status as an exploited class. It is untrue that workers are only capable of achieving 'trade union consciousness'. The Paris Commune of 1871, the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the Spanish Revolution of 1936-38 and the Hungarian Workers' Council of 1956, all prove that the working class is capable of rising to the greatest heights of revolutionary consciousness, and of challenging the very basis of all exploiting regimes.

(7) Between its great revolutionary upsurges, the working class has attempted to create political and trade union organizations to fight for both its immediate and long-term interests. These organizations have all degenerated and now express non-proletarian social interests. This degeneration has an objective basis, in the changing structure of capitalist society, and a subjective basis in the imposition of capitalist methods of thinking and organization into the ranks of the labour movement. Both facts therefore reflect the persistence of capitalism.

The struggle of the working class for its social emancipation is not just a simple, day-by-day struggle against capitalist exploitation. It also takes place within the working class itself, against the constant rebirth of capitalist ideas and reformist illusions. The fight of the revolutionary organization against all forms of ideological mystification - and against those who disseminate them - is both essential and inevitable.

(8) Socialism means workers' management, both at the level of the factory and of society as a whole. If the working class does not hold economic power firmly in its own hands, its political power will at best be insecure. As long as the working class hold economic power, its political power cannot degenerate. Factory committees and workers' councils are the probable forms through which the working class will exert its rule.

'Nationalisation' and 'planning' can only have a socialist content if associated with workers' management of production and working class political power. In and of themselves, they can solve nothing. If the workers do not themselves manage society, 'nationalisation' and 'planning' can become ruthless instruments of exploitation.

(9) The class needs a revolutionary organization, not as its self-appointed leadership but as an instrument of its struggle. The organization should assist workers in dispute, help through its press to generalise working class experience, provide a framework for linking up autonomous organs of working class struggle and constantly stress the ideas and revolutionary potentialities of independent mass action.

The structure of the organization should reflect the highest achievements of working class struggle (i.e. workers' councils) rather than imitate capitalist types of organization. It should anticipate the socialist future of society rather than mirror its capitalist past. In practice this means:

a) that local organs have the fullest autonomy, in relation to their own activities, that is in keeping with the general purpose and outlook of the organization.

b) that direct democracy (i.e. the collective decision of all those concerned) is resorted to wherever materially possible.

c) that all central bodies having power of decision involving others should be constituted by delegates, these being elected by those they represent and revocable by them, at any time.

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