

THE STRUGGLE OF IDEAS

Our Programme points to the ideological development of the Working Class as the principal problem before us. Whence the need? Why have we, the oldest and most advanced proletariat in the capitalist world, failed to make a revolution? We know the answer: that social democracy (the ideology of reforms gradually whittling capitalism away until it peacefully evolves into socialism) has usurped the place of Marxism-Leninism in the mind of the Working Class. But where does this ideology come from and why has it adhered?

Facile answers must be dismissed. "Corruption of leaders" is a fact, not an explanation. It simply defers an explanation by one step. Workers are thinking beings. Why do they choose to hand the leadership to an opportunist and why don't they condemn him when he betrays? "Bribery of the Class" was wrong when first advanced and has been contradicted by the facts ever since. "Petty-bourgeois" influence (i.e. influence from those outside the struggle) is simply another version of the "misleadership" notion. Ever since the Working Class came into being their onward march has been watched by legions of spectators, begging, cajoling, flattering, haranguing and attempting to direct them, to no avail: yet workers have harkened to the siren song of social democracy. In themselves the social democratic theorists are of no importance, an academic backwater. What matters is that their ideas find a responsive chord in the Working Class. Why?

From first principles of dialectical materialism it is wrong to see social democracy (i.e. ideological underdevelopment in the Working Class) as an imposition upon the class from without. A thing develops, or fails to develop, through the working out of contradictions internal to it, not through pressure from outside. Explanations which rest on notions of corrupt leadership or "petty-bourgeois" influence or bribery by imperialism all dodge the main issue - the Working Class itself.

Those who hold such notions invariably stand outside the class they theorise about. They see, correctly, the Working Class as the most progressive force in history, the emancipator of all humanity. But they lack the ability, or the materialist courage, to look below the surface and see the confusion as well as the clarity, the corruption as well as the incorruptibility, the self-seekingness as well as the self-sacrifice. Yet one divides into two. These things can be understood in the dialectical development of a class. We of the Party, born of that class and part of it,

must have the courage to know our class if we are to have the boldness to lead them.

To understand the contradiction within the Working Class mind between Marxism-Leninism and social democracy we need to look at history. In the long quantitative development of any process, stages (qualitative breaks) may be detected. There have been two distinct stages in the development of the British Working Class: a stage at which the class was gathering strength, ideological as well as material and numerical, and the strategic goal was survival; and a stage at which the strength now gathered could be deployed and the strategic goal was revolution.

The working class as we know it today (what Marx called "the modern industrial proletariat") came into being largely in the years around 1800. In this period the working day was increased from 10 hours to sometimes as much as 18 hours. In the 1833 Factory Act, 12 hours was set as the limit for children under 18, there being no limit to the working hours of adults. There is no need to elaborate in detail the wages and working conditions of that period. Without resistance to this assault from the employers the Working Class would have been exterminated. The fact that in the process the capitalist class, totally dependant as it is upon the labour of workers, would have exterminated itself also would not have deterred it. This would not have been the first time that a parasite had destroyed its host.

It goes without saying that the Working Class did resist. Previous short-term, small scale attempts at trade union organisation gave way to larger and more serious efforts. It became clear that the only strength was in the collective, and the collective had to be disciplined. The disciplined collective could manipulate the availability of labour in such a way as to compel capitalism to allow a living to the workers. The struggle was long and bitter. Workers were imprisoned, transported, killed. But in time they won. They extorted concession after concession from the capitalist class on front after front and achieved their strategic aim: survival with dignity.

This was the first stage in working class development; it could not be the last. The fight for survival is a noble fight and never-ending, for capitalism never relents, never willingly makes any concession to its opposing class. But the positions that have been won are not truly secure so long as capitalism is allowed to exist. The Combination Acts were repealed in 1824 but this the employers have never accepted. We see today continual

enemy offensives into the territory of our class: attempts to resurrect the Combination Acts, to destroy industrial democracy, to withdraw the concessions that have been wrung over 150 years of struggle. The fight for survival is inherently defensive. But eternal defence means eternal subjection; emphasis upon survival within capitalism becomes, if not developed, emphasis upon living with the system that oppresses. In the second stage of development the fight must be offensive, the strategic aim proletarian revolution.

Social democracy had its origin in the victories won in the first stage of Working Class development. At that stage it was correct to limit the struggle to reforms and concessions since that was all that could be achieved. The crime of social democracy is that at the second stage, when revolution is possible, it continues so to limit the struggle. Now the fight for reforms is converted into a "theory" of "gradualism". Socialism is bowdlerized into a legislative programme for a Labour government. Attempts are made to ossify the class war into perpetual defensive combat, trench warfare, where so much attention must be given to retaining the positions that have been won that none can be spared for those that are yet to be captured. That "they have a world to win" is forgotten.

The essence of social democratic thinking is empiricism. It is materialist (all thought of the producing class cannot help but be materialist) but the materialism is blinkered. Immediate solutions are sought to immediate problems and each is seen in isolation from the rest. There is no sense of perspective, of development, no awareness of how the parts merge to form a whole which is itself in process of change. So, to the empiricist, our present system has existed and will exist for all eternity: it cannot be changed, it can only be modified. It is hit-or-miss materialism, without the dialectics which a truly materialist approach reveals. Empiricism cannot see the wood for the trees and therefore it misperceives the trees. The big issues are reduced to a comfortable House of Commons size and the small ones are blown up out of all proportion to their importance. The political line is entirely tailist, always responding to action by the opposing class, never leading.

Such thinking is immature and it corresponds to the stage of a class "in itself" before it has become aware of the contradictions in which it moves. It is candyfloss thinking, seeing the flotsam and jetsam on the surface but not the great tide moving beneath. Mature thinking, characteristic of a class "for itself", is dialectical materialist, the class soberly aware of itself and its contradictions and taking its destiny securely into its own

hands.

On this philosophical level, therefore, the defeat of social democracy and the victory of Marxism-Leninism means the defeat of empiricism and the victory of dialectical materialism. Empiricism is practice unguided by theory and therefore blind, groping in the dark. All other working class organs in Britain are social democratic and empirical in their approach, working on a day-to-day basis, seeing things from the standpoint of a region or a section and therefore seeing them out of perspective. The Party alone is dedicated to the interests of the entire Working Class and to no other interests. We see farther because we are dialectical materialists and for no other reason.

Long before the birth of Karl Marx ideas that were in essence Marxist existed within the working class. Clearest proof of this is in the struggles carried out in the early Nineteenth Century, which were not spontaneous but rather reflected the thought -- at a high level, Marxist -- of those who conducted them. The thinking is shown in the proliferation of newspapers and journals at a time when writers and editors were deemed so dangerous that the employers attempted (but failed) to tax and legislate them out of existence.

Luddism, often used today simply as a term of abuse signifying "mindless militancy", was not at all mindless. If some Luddites believed that the way to stop a machine from taking your job was to break it, that is no more backward and in some ways much more advanced than the "sophisticated" social democratic rationalising that we meet today. But the majority knew well that to break the machine was but a first step to the breaking of the class who brought in the machine; and this is proved by the fragmentary documentation which has survived. Their forms of organisation, which government spies and agents provocateurs were unable to penetrate or break, foreshadowed in discipline (which is always based on ideological conviction) the Bolshevik Party.

In the first stage of working class development there was no contradiction between proletarian revolution and survival: the revolutionary line was "fight for survival". But as the class developed and advanced to the second stage the contradiction developed also. Owenism and Chartism were the first examples of social democratic diversion of struggle; all the proletarian energy aroused in 50 years of struggle in which trade unions, the mass organs of the class, were founded, defended and

ensured, was squandered on the schemes of a bourgeois do-gooder and a monstrous petition to Parliament. The ideology of survival turned into its opposite — an ideology which will destroy the Working Class unless it is rejected. Today we can see with absolute clarity that social democracy is the principal ideological prop of the bourgeoisie.

Marx's achievement was to digest and expand the thought of the Working Class, to show that intellectually the Working Class was the heir to the ages. Workers' thought, because of the operation of dialectical materialism, was a continuation and extension of the best thought, the revolutionary thought, of the bourgeoisie.

Capitalism in its early days was a force for progress, liberating man from the mind-forged manacles of Feudalism. The Renaissance was the Great Bourgeois Cultural Revolution. However, with the defeat of Feudalism and the establishment of bourgeois class dictatorship and capitalist exploitation, what had been a force for progress became a force for reaction. Terrified of what is new in the arts and the intellect, capitalism tries to trivialize and debase what is old. Man's skills, our most precious heritage of all, are cheapened and then denied. There is no need to think, say the bourgeoisie; our computer will think for you. All labour depends on hand and brain. Yet capitalism always attempts to deny this materialist truth and to reduce all workers to mechanical beings, units of "general labour", interchangeable and dispensable. Capitalist thinking today is epitomized by social democracy, which permeates the universities and all the establishment organs of culture.

Against this stand Marxism-Leninism and the Working Class. Workers must fight for their intellectual birthright against a Philistine and boorish employing class. We have a world to lose as well as a world to win. The Working Class, headed by its vanguard party, must be the custodian of the old as well as the creator of the new. We are the true conservatives, opposing the apostles of stagnation, reaction and nihilism.

From the earliest times, Marxism has coexisted with social democracy within the mind of the Working Class, indeed within the mind of every individual worker. There is no division into Red and White. Sometimes the most advanced can be the most backward and the most backward the most advanced; such is the dialectic of development. Within the Party this is true as well as within the class.

Within the working class the process of ideological development is moving very fast; much of the time it outstrips us, the Party. There is no doubt that the key factor in this development was the founding of the Party in 1968. For over a century the vanguard of the Working Class had been the engineering workers. Our Party was founded by the vanguard of the vanguard who, by the most revolutionary act in the history of the class, showed that practice leads to theory and pointed the ideological direction that the entire class has begun to follow.

Our task is to turn the whole country into a great school of Marxism-Leninism, to ensure that as each section of the class moves into battle the Party is there. Guerrilla struggle enabled our class to survive. Guerrilla struggle with Marxist-Leninist leadership will guarantee the ideological development, the recapture by the Working Class of its own ideology, which will take us to higher forms of struggle and the proletarian revolution.

Three years ago we wrote:

"For many years Marxists prophesied the collapse of capitalism. But it comes not from wishing and must be placed in its historical time. Now we begin to see it here at its proper pace of decay — very rapid.

"To all our comrades we say: now Practice and Theory. Now listen to our workmates and learn, support and fight with them.

"To all militants, leaders in workshop, we ask: see this great struggle in its full size. Our struggle is not economic alone. Stand now and give blow to this crumbling capitalism. Use your theory and class knowledge — reflect your need to be Marxists in struggle — join our Party.

"To our comrades we say: go now to these leaders. Endeavour to recruit from among them the very best now leading those battles. Do it in humility. We confer no favour, we need their wisdom and courage that all shall advance.

"FROM THE MASSES TO THE MASSES."