

Session 6 – Notes

(8/28/98 @ J.'s)

Continuing more or less with overall agenda from last time.

Ted proposed that we postpone discussion of exactly which kind of organization we want to build until after we finish our more general political discussions.

The key advances of 150 years of communist struggle:

L. said that Maoist theory/experience represents the highest level so far; our discussion should be based on summing this up.

General agreement with this, I think, although C. pointed out that it is necessary to refer back to earlier history in some cases. For example national chauvinism was not just a problem in socialist China, but also in the Soviet Union during the Stalin period.

Some of the key advances itemized (put into a more chronological order):

- a. Marx's analysis of the capitalist economic system, pointing out that it contains the seeds of its own destruction.
- b. Important philosophical advances, such as M&E's basic theory of dialectical materialism, and elaborations later by Lenin, Mao and others.
- c. Marx's recognition of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat
- d. The Leninist party
 - A lesson of the Paris Commune not summed up by Marx
- e. Lenin's strategy of revolutionary defeatism in imperialist war
- f. Victory of the October Revolution
- g. Mao's theory of the New Democratic revolution
- h. Mao's theory of people's war
- i. Mao's theory of the mass line
- j. The victory of the Chinese Revolution
- k. The upsurge in anti-imperialist liberation struggles after World War II
- l. The recognition in Maoist China that the masses should *own* the science of MLM
- m. Mao's theory of continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the recognition that the enemy reemerged within the Communist Party itself.
- n. The concentration on "bourgeois right" as the economic source for the reemergence of the bourgeoisie (originally theorized by Marx, but re-emphasized in the GPCR).
- o. [Primarily from outside Marxism:]
 - Women's liberation & gender issues
 - Environmental awareness & struggle
 - Anti-Eurocentrism & indigenous people's struggles

Davis discussed the L.A. uprising in light of this 150 year history.

Some other things could obviously have been mentioned, but were more or less taken for granted in our discussion, such as Marx's doctrine of historical materialism, Lenin's theory of imperialism, and Lenin & Stalin's theory of the national question.

We intended also to list the **key stumbling blocks** that have arisen in the past 150 years of revolutionary struggle, but we didn't get into that yet, at least systematically. Of course all the above key advances were solutions to stumbling blocks that were overcome (in the realm of theory at least). Specific problems that were mentioned in passing were:

- a. national chauvinism in the socialist USSR & socialist China
- b. the "3-worlds theory" established in Mao's China, and intensified during the revisionist period
- c. paternalism (I'm not sure if Stalin's type of paternalism was meant, or male chauvinism.)
- d. the profound contradiction between making world revolution and defending the revolutionary gains which were made in specific countries

Key features of the world today:

1. Further globalization of the capitalist economy
2. Economic mess. Economic problems are more focused
3. Instability!
4. Issue of whether the rate of profit is declining
5. Block formation dynamics
 - Are military fault lines following economic fault lines?
 - C. commented how the U.S. imperialists are trying to take advantage of the economic crisis in other countries, and at the same time attempt to forestall the development of military fault lines
 - C. also remarked that military alliances tend to follow the last war, while economic alliances tend to predict the next war.
 - A.M. said that RCP's *AID* focuses too much on competition and not enough on collusion. The bourgeois economy is so internationalized. "Can Calif. nuke NY?" (This seems to be an argument in favor of the idea that inter-imperialist war is now much less likely.)
 - Which is primary, the intensification of the contradictions between blocks, or the globalization and mitigation of these contradictions? (I don't think we have unity on this issue.)
6. Terri emphasized the growing importance of the environmental crisis, as one of the very most essential features of the world today.
 - G. mentioned the *World Watch* article about the Yellow River not even reaching the sea a couple hundred days a year. Also the Chinese economic strategy of moving to industrial production and buying more and more wheat abroad, and the likely much higher prices of wheat and detrimental effects on so many other countries.
 - L. however cautioned against Malthusian arguments

As a continuation of the above discussion we spent a fair amount of time debating the question: **What is the principal contradiction in the world today?** There seemed to be two basic schools of thought: Ted and several other people said that it is imperialism vs. the oppressed peoples of the world. A.M., with the support of a couple other people, argued that it is the contradiction between various competing capitalist groups, but based not so much on nationality as international capital groupings. I believe A.M. was saying that this is pretty much the same as the fundamental contradiction of capitalism (between socialized production and private appropriation), but I am personally a little unclear on how this can be.

C. saw some validity to both points of view. But I didn't quite follow his line of thought either, so I can't report it very well.

A lot does seem to depend on this question, and the particularities arising from it. Ted pointed out that in many "third world" countries the proletariat in the cities has been growing by leaps and bounds, and that in some the proletariat is now larger than the peasantry. This suggests that the theory of New Democratic revolution may need to be modified in some countries. Ted also pointed out that the developing world economic crisis is hitting much harder in the oppressed countries today, which is intensifying what he takes to be the principal contradiction.

G. said that what caused the Indonesian meltdown, however, was the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, not the contradiction of imperialism vs. the masses of the world.

I (J.), said that what we are trying to determine is the principal *political* contradiction in the world, and that from that perspective Ted's view is correct. (I have written up a quick paper on this that I'll hand out with these notes. But this is an unresolved issue for us, and I hope A.M. and others will also address it further.)

The point was made that it is necessary for our group to develop a correct analysis of the world economy. I don't think anybody disagrees with that, but L. pointed out that this could be a very major project taking many months or longer, and we should not let the necessity of creating such a document prevent us from doing other important work. In particular, he argued for the importance of establishing a new, more correct Maoist voice in the revolutionary community, and doing so as quickly as we reasonably can. I personally agree with that completely. However, many others feel that we do not yet have the necessary degree of unity to do this.

L. also suggested that one of the things we could do which might be of immediate value would be to help me finish the mass line manuscript and get it out to the revolutionary movement. I, of course, thought that was a great idea. However there was complete silence from everyone else, which I take to be complete disagreement.

Other things:

In passing, G. remarked that "leadership means providing analysis". That's an important comment, which we didn't get a chance to follow up on. I would say that this is *one* of the functions involved in providing leadership. Are you saying G. that it is the essence of the matter?

One of the concerns a number of people in the group have is that they are not ready to be part of a democratic centralist organization which they see as requiring more from them (in time, energy, and group decisions about the work they should be doing) than they are presently ready to commit—especially since we do not seem to have unity on a number of important questions. I believe this means that those of us who hoped to see a democratic centralist organization established must give up on that idea for now. But there are other ways to proceed.

We hope to flesh out some "points of unity" (and perhaps "points of disagreement"?) over the next couple days.