

FIGHT TO MAKE Every Factory Our Fortress

The year 1974 has seen a tremendous upsurge in the spontaneous movement of the working class as exemplified by the growing strike wave. What is the significance of this huge strike wave that began in July of this year? Over 650 strikes in the basic and supportive industries involving one quarter of a million workers were reported to have taken place in one week. Corporations hit by strikes included U.S. Steel, Kennecott Copper, Dow Chemical, United Auto Workers, National Airlines, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, A.C. Transit Bus Workers, Northern California Carpenters, Alcoa, the Telephone Company, State workers in Ohio and Maryland and many more. This is the largest wave of strikes to hit the USNA since the years of post World War II when nearly three and one half million workers went out on strike for wage increases.

Men and women workers in the basic and supportive industries have gone on strike protesting cuts in real wages due to the high inflationary prices that they have to pay for the necessities of life. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that increases in consumer prices averaged about 13% in the industrial countries from June 1973 to June 1974. The workers in Japan are suffering under an inflation rate of 21.9%, Canada 11.4%, USNA 11.2%, Britain 16% and West Germany 6.9%. (1)

At first glance, the wave of inflation in the USNA seems to be caused by the huge amounts of government spending. Last year, military spending hit a high of \$81 billion dollars, more than the greatest yearly expenditure of World War II and up \$5 billion from the year before. It is the working class that paid for, not only this war budget,

but the huge proposed national budget for 1975 of \$305 billion. Profits are soaring to a new high for Texaco, whose profits increased 72% over 1973, Mobil Oil 99%, Exxon 66%, Standard Oil of Indiana 130%, U.S. Steel 88%, Arco Steel 57%, Alcoa 66%, Kennecott Copper 58%.⁽²⁾ (Incidentally many of these companies who are being hit by strikes are the very same companies who made the highest profits last year.) These industries are really reaping their enormous profits from the backs of the world's working class. It is this striving for maximum profits that directly leads to over-production which has as one of its immediate effects, inflation. In reality, it is the working class' unpaid labor time that is being used by the capitalist class to pay the banks some of the highest interests rates in the history of the USNA - 9% to 10%.

Inflation adds to the misery of the working class, particularly the most exploited and oppressed. But in order for us to get a proper political perspective of the economic situation today, we must see what are the causes and what the effects.

Marx pointed out long ago that "...the very development of modern industry must progressively turn the scale in favour of the capitalist against the working man, and that consequently the general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to sink the average standard of wages, or to push the value of labour more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at

making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation....the struggles for the standard of wages are incidents inseparable from the whole wages system....the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these every day struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects, that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction, that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady...They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system, simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work', they ought to inscribe on the banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system'....(trade unions) fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say the ultimate abolition of the wages system." (3) The cause of the problems of the working class is the private appropriation of socialized labour. The effects of this contradiction are inflation, war, national oppression and the relative and absolute impoverishment of the working class.

Marx fully agreed with Engels who said "...the conditions of the working class is the starting point of all social movements today." Marx valued the struggle of the workers for shorter hours and better working conditions and spent much of his life engaged in practical forms of struggle against the capitalist class, in such organizations as the Workers Association, the International Workingman's Association and the Workers Education League, etc. He fought always for the workers' partial demands, but he also knew the role that they played in the general class struggle. In the Communist Manifesto he says, "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the monetary interests of the working class, but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of that movement." (4)

While the overall program for Communists is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Socialism we must also see what are our immediate political tasks today and what is the path to the end of the wages system.

The Communist movement has declared that its aim is to as-

"BLOODY HARLAN"

Since July, 1973 the coal miners of Harlan County, Kentucky have been on a militant strike against the Duke Power Company. Armed clashes between the strikers and the gun thugs and scabs are daily events. The company has used Klan style "midnight raids" to try to terrorize the workers. On August 8 for example the local union president's house was riddled with more than 100 45-caliber slugs as he, his wife and 3 children slept inside and the local police and state troopers have acted as the company's police.

3,000 miners from around the country marched in Harlan County August 22 in support of the Brookside strikers. This was part of a 5 day memorial stoppage to commemorate the 100,000 miners lost in the mines or disabled due to black lung disease since 1900. In response, on August 24 the company shot and nearly killed a striking miner. The miners rose up in anger and threatened a general

strike. The company has now been forced to begin negotiations with the miners for the first time in this strike. A general strike of all miners will be called if the injured miner dies or if negotiations break down.

This attack on these courageous strikers is an attack on the whole of the working class. If the capitalists can shoot one of our fellow workers, they will not hesitate in using any means to suppress our whole struggle. We must rally the whole working class in support of the striking Harlan County miners; we must raise this call in our shops, our unions and community organizations. This is a key battle in the general rise in resistance of the working class to the over-production crisis. The heroic men and women of Harlan County are blazing the trail of hard struggle that the entire working class must follow. We must everywhere raise the demand -

SUPPORT THE HARLAN COUNTY STRIKERS

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sist the struggle of the working class by developing the class consciousness of the workers, by promoting their organization and showing them the aims and objects of the struggle. The tasks facing the Communists in this stage of party building is to win the vanguard of the proletariat to the cause of communism and in so doing, unite the whole of the working class with the ideas of socialism. In order to fulfill this task, we must engage in the class struggle with particular emphasis in the economic struggle because for the most part this is where the current upsurge of the working class is taking place. Our call "everything to the front" means to ground ourselves in the factories, establish factory nuclei, and in the main mass organizations of the working class, not only organize support for the factory work but organize all aspects of the working struggle into a torrent of revolution.

Any attempt to separate the economic struggle from the political struggle or any attempt to absolutize either side means a deviation toward economism or sectarianism. Lenin put the economists in their place when he told them for the workers, "...such activity is not enough for us, we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of 'economic' politics alone, we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of all aspects of political life and to take part actively in every single political event." (5) The history of Communists in the economic movement has been the fight conducted against either deviation against either ideological representative of the bourgeoisie.

One important aspect in the fight against revisionism is precisely this question of the inseparable connection between the economic and political struggle in the revolutionary process and whether Communist or Bourgeois politics are introduced into the spontaneous movement.

The essence of revisionism is the denial of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is concretely expressed in their tactics within the class struggle. Thus their tactics are that of raising reforms as an end in themselves rather than as a means to revolution. The revisionists do not fight to raise the level of the consciousness of the working class to class consciousness but rather retard the movement by bowing to spontaneity by "lending the economic struggle itself a political character". Lenin was very clear when he said, "Very often the economic struggle spontaneously assumes a political character, that is to say without the intervention of the 'revolutionary bacilli - the intelligentsia,' without the intervention of the class conscious Social-Democrats. For example, the economic struggle

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of the British workers also assumed a political character without any intervention of the Socialists. The tasks of the Social-Democrats, however, are not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is to convert trade union politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, to utilize the sparks of political consciousness, which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of raising them to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness." (6)

We also witness the "left" groups making sweeping statements that these strikes are massive class struggles against the ruling class...."the struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the entire class of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. '.....Every class struggle is a political struggle' these famous words of Marx are not to be understood to mean that any struggle of workers against employers must always be a political struggle. They must be understood to mean that the struggle of the workers against the capitalist\$ inevitably becomes a political struggle insofar as it becomes a class struggle. It is the task of the Social Democrats (Communists, ed) by organizing the workers, by conducting propaganda and agitation among them, to turn their spontaneous struggle against their oppressors into the struggle of the whole class, into the struggle of a definite political party for definite political and socialist ideals." (7)

Marxism-Leninism does not tie the movement of the working class to any particular form of struggle nor does it create mass struggle. Marxism-Leninism demands that the most exacting investigation of the social situation should be made so that the tactics which are consciously developed according to the changing objective conditions in the course of the mass movement can be generalized, organized and made conscious to the workers.

We are in the period of building a multi-national Communist Party, of winning the vanguard of the proletariat to the cause of communism. Our tasks are many and there are no "short-cuts". The foundation of every political movement has been the economic struggle. Again we state that we must find every way and means of throwing our vanguard forces into the spontaneous movement of the working class today in order to revolutionize the class. In the words of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: "THE WORKING CLASS IS REVOLUTIONARY OR IT IS NOTHING"!

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- 1) Business Week
- 2) US News & World Report,
8/12/74.
- 3) Marx, Wages, Price and Profit,
FLPP, 1965, p. 77.
- 4) Marx and Engels, The Communist
Manifesto, FLPP, 1972, p. 74.
- 5) Lenin, "What is to Be Done?",
Collected Works, Vol. 5, Prog.
Pub., Moscow, 1964.
- 6) Lenin, What is to Be Done?,
FLPP, 1973, p. 90.
- 7) Lenin, "Our Immediate Tasks,"
Collected Works, Vol. IV, Prog.
Pub., Moscow, 1964, pp. 215-216.

