

Walter Mead

I'm sure some of you would like to raise some questions of either of the speakers. Do we have some questions?

Speaker 2:

I want to know more about what RU is doing in Chicago, in the inner city community and the working people in Chicago.

Tim Devine:

Well, we're doing a large number of things. The main thing, which we try to do, is to work with people on the job. You see, that is fundamental to organize people the way society has them organized and that is where people work. So the vast majority of members of the RU work in factories. I myself presently don't work, I work full-time for the RU, before that I worked three years in factories in the area. But the vast majority of members do work in the factories. And what they do tactically in the factories depends on what the conditions, what the particular conditions in that place are. Is there a trade union, if there's not it's – the question of having a trade union is very important. But whatever is done the main political point that's brought to it is what is the struggle, which is going to advance the understanding and consciousness of the workers that through their united struggle that they have the will power to change things.

Now, we see this leading to the development in the – over the next period of time of the formation of anti-imperialist workers organization. Say something similar to the Attica Brigade but among workers especially that will link the struggles of workers from a lot of different places around the city and will point out the political enemy, not just the particulars, say boss of the company that they're in. But how, like for instance in steel now, there may well be very big layoffs coming in steel. There already have been big layoffs like at the Torrance Avenue Ford Plant because of they're retooling to produce small cars now instead of the larger cars that take more gasoline.

A lot of real important work can be done there in explaining how it's not just a question that your boss wants to lay you off because he doesn't like you or something like that or just because he's on hard times, the company isn't making profits. Those companies have been making profits hand over foot. The point is that the system itself is in a crisis, it's happening in every major industry and where it hasn't been yet it's going to fairly soon. Another thing we do is work on a newspaper which is put out both by us and workers from a variety of shops, it's called the Peoples Voice and it's sold at mainly at factory gates but also in the communities especially on weekends and in shopping areas and stuff like that. Which tries to report about the various struggles that are going on among workers in the city as well as what's going in nationally and internationally. Those are the main things that we do. But we see that developing towards an organization, a mass organization of workers.

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 00:03:33] It seems to me, anti-Nixon when you criticize [inaudible 00:03:08]

Tim Devine:

There's sort of two sides to it. It really depends on what Nixon does. In the sense that like in the last election I understand in terms of the printed media, it was something like over 90% of the printed media

supported Nixon for re-election. However, there's still a lot of differences with the people who are behind the press have with policies that Nixon has and where that leads. They're out of power now, essentially. Johnson was their man and they got aced out on him. And they have contradictions with that. And I agree that there are differences that exist there. The point is that those aren't fundamental differences, those are differences about how to make the system work, how to hold it together, how to keep their privileged position. Not a difference over whether or not the exploitation of the press should go on, it's how to carry that out. A lot of people point to the Soviet Union and they say, "Well, what you're talking about here sounds real good. If we could just get rid of exploitation and oppression in society, it would be great." But the Soviet Union proves that even revolutionists starts out with the best ideals and inevitably collapses and a new ruling class reemerges.

We believe that it is true that a new capitalist ruling class has arisen in the Soviet Union. That if formed around a group of people and a top party position within Russia who gained power after the death of Stalin. And that they systematically began to reinstitute capitalist property relations. They do it in some pretty slick ways. For instance, it's not like they have a piece of paper that says that they own the factories, however they control the financial crediting system for the whole country similar to say the role that large banks play here. That if the large banks want to withhold loans, they can shut a particular industry down, they can determine policy. The same exists with the state and the ruling fleet that exists within the Soviet Union. They've reinstated profit as the major measure of the effectiveness of a particular industry, not whether it produces the quality of the production but whether or not it turns a profit. Unemployment, which was eliminated in the Soviet Union, is now on the rise again. People aren't guaranteed work.

There's a lot of things, what we usually hear about in the West is like the oppression of a certain group of intellectuals or something like that, which is real as well. But that's not the main thing that's happening in the Soviet Union. The other side of this we can see is in another country which is similar, Poland where a year or so ago they just had big uprisings and forced the government to increase the wages of the workers. There is for instance in Poland there is a new communist party and its underground and there's a development of all those same kinds of things in all the other Eastern European countries. Now as to the question of whether or not the development of that kind of thing is inevitable, we believe that the Chinese revolution under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party has come up with it. With the solution to the development of a new ruling group within society and that was what the Chinese called the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Maybe if we go into the question of democracy a little bit later, we'll get on to that some more. But basically what that was was a situation where the same kind of thing that developed in the Soviet Union was developing in China under the leadership of the man who was president of China and vice-chairman of the Communist Party. His name was Liu Shou-ch'eng and he had a group of people around him who were also trying to reinstitute capitalism in China. And so what Mao Tse-tung was the head of the party there basically did was say – he put it out to people that says there are people in this party, in the Communist Party here who are trying to restore capitalism.

And he said, "I put it to the people. What are you going to do about that?" They did away with it. Mass meetings began to take place, mobilizations occurred. People rose up and went to the party leaders, they examined their history, and they said, "What you have been doing, has that been in our interests? Has that been in the interest of the people? Or have you been trying to benefit yourself off of it? Have you been building a little egg nest off to the side here and trying to accumulate wealth for yourself." They got rid of the ones who were doing that.

But as the Chinese see it that's going to be a continuing process. And that is what we see is the only real guarantee if that's what it can be called, a guarantee that socialism can succeed. And that is if that the Communist leadership relies on the masses of people and calls on them to come forward in times of struggle and say, "We put it to you, which way do you want it to go?" That's the only guarantee.

Speaker 4:

You mentioned [inaudible 00:09:18] because it just strikes me that that's all Stalin did was [inaudible 00:09:32] country, do you [inaudible 00:09:38] not this path of building, the revolution [inaudible 00:09:54]

Shelly Bogen:

Well, first of all that stuff like revisionism and about the development of visions in the Soviet Union, I would say is tied in with the whole question of socialism in one country. It's true a lot of this stuff did crop up before Stalin's death. And in fact the – there's a book Stalin wrote called "Economic Problems in the Soviet Union" where he talks about this and in fact a lot of it is the types of policies that Khrushchev instituted in the economy. And Stalin wrote this book in opposition to it and struggled against these types of people who were putting forward these types of policies, which would in fact reinstitute capitalism in the Soviet Union. Now there's problems with the way I think that these were struggled against. Say I think that the correct way was a good way that the Chinese people did was bring it to the broad masses of people and so that the broad masses of people insure. If you've got 800 million people who really understand Marxism and Leninism and really understand how to keep a society socialist; you're going to have a hard time reinstituting capitalism. Now part of the problem with the Soviet Union was that a lot of the struggle was carried on inside the Communist Party. It wasn't brought to the masses of people. But Stalin himself did definitely struggle against it, so he struggled against it and you can read his book and it talks a lot about the policies that were instituted by Khrushchev.

Tim Devine:

A couple things in there, like do we think that the revolution is international or worldwide? Well, we think the working class is and we think capitalism is international. Both are international phenomenon. Yes, we think that it's international. At the same time, does not capitalism develop within particular countries in particular ways? Is there not uneven development in capitalism, that's a basic law of Marxists. And so is it – it's not because we wouldn't like the idea say, the international working class as a single person rising up and dealing with the international capitalist classes as a single person. It's not that we don't like the idea, it's just that historical experience shows that because of uneven development certain countries arise first and then revolution and socialism develops first in certain places and then in other places. The point is, the unity is, is that each struggle, each successful struggle against imperialism and capitalism, each new socialist revolution that occurs is part of an international revolution. That to the degree, for instance when China had a revolution, that was very important for the working class in the United States. Why? Because it weakened the rulers, the same enemy that the workers in the United States have the Chinese people also have. So we say that things develop historically in a certain way. We say, "Well, maybe ideally, maybe the way we would fantasize about it, that's not the way we would like it to happen." But that's the way it historically happens.

Speaker 5:

My impression of RU is that it is made up largely of college-educated students of middle class background as contrasted to blue coat workers. The question I'd like to ask you is: 1) is this true? And 2)

to what extent does your own identity as students and as coming essentially from middle class backgrounds thwart you in your work in trying to get some kind of identification with the American Proletariat?

Tim Devine:

I tried to explain right at the beginning that indeed, when the RU first formed – the Revolutionary Union first formed that that was almost exclusively young white students from middle class backgrounds, I guess you could say. But the point is is what you – you take that as – I'll give you an example, the same thing was true of the Chinese Communist Party, I hate to be – to carry on about China but it's a very good example of a lot of things. It started with a group of 21 Han, that's the majority race, Han intellectuals from the middle class in 1921, in that era. The point is that because they studied the signs of revolution, because they took what they learned to the people that they were able to go and expand geometrically among all sections of the population, particularly the workers, and we feel that that same process is occurring in the RU. Increasingly, more and more workers are joining the ranks of the communist movement and are giving leadership to that movement.

Speaker 5:

Do you have any idea what percentage would be non-student?

Tim Devine:

In a formal sense, in the sense in which I don't think you mean, in terms of who are students right now? Or who were students at one time?

Speaker 5:

Who are students in terms of not having had a college student background at one time?

Tim Devine:

No, I couldn't tell you what the percentage is on that.

Speaker 6:

I think we all realize the importance of [inaudible 00:15:27] is that [inaudible 00:15:40]. What do you think [inaudible 00:15:50] to really develop [inaudible 00:15:57] it seems like a lot of [inaudible 00:16:03] it's just not [inaudible 00:16:05] more like your in partnership as we [inaudible 00:16:13].

Tim Devine:

That goes to the question – this is one thing that's a principle for – another principle for Marxism is that people learn thought their own experience. And that for instance, I think there's a lot of things being learned on the highways today that the truck – like the power of the Teamsters. For instance is being powerfully demonstrated, especially up in Indiana today where a 100-truck semi's parked on the street and shut down the toll road for a period of time to protest against the government policies and the energy crisis and the speed limits.

So on the one hand; this is what I tried to explain in terms to the way we relate to that one strike in particular and some other things. The other side of that is that there has to be a revolutionary ideology,

which is attached to that. Which people come to see that not only do they have short-range interest, that is the idea of keep buying and selling together in this world. Have enough food to eat, a decent house to live in, but people have those interests. But they also have other long-range interests. But the only guarantee of it for workers to have a decent life in this world ultimately is going to be the elimination of that. And people will come to see that through their own experience. It's a fact that the working class in the United States has been cut off from its revolutionary history. Workers by and large don't even know of the struggles that went on in the Seattle drives in the 30's. They don't know that there were sit-downs in the major auto factories. Most workers in Chicago have probably forgotten about the Memorial Day Massacre at Republic Steel and this kind of thing. This is a job that one of the tasks, which we try to take on in connecting with other people, is to bring this history back, to bring the ideas, the ideology – combine that with the day-to-day struggle, which is going forward, raising the consciousness with the masses of people. That's the only - there's no gimmick, there's no gimmick to making a revolution. It's not like if you just come up with the right slogan at the right time people are going to do it. People themselves through their experience will gain the understanding of how it is to be done.

Shelly Bogen:

It's also – say something else – like I don't know who once said it but someone once said it, the ruling class, the Bourgeoisie, they're real good teachers too. And what's happening now, especially as imperialism as a whole system is facing the crisis is that the people are beginning to really suffer for it. And it happens real quickly, you get stuff like the wage freeze and you get the new energy freeze. You've got to drive 50 miles an hour and turn down you thermometer and everything else and they're laying off workers. And they're saying the reason for this is because of the energy freeze and everything else. You get all these social services cut, cuts to welfare and education and everything else. And people learn, as Tim said, through their experience. And people learn through what's happened in the country. And people's conscious begin to develop through that too. And the crisis of imperialism is only getting deeper. They're trying to find their way out of it right now but it's really getting a lot deeper. And people are going to learn from all these things that happened and the energy crisis over here and wage controls and the cuts to social services it all begins – connected up -

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