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With the intensification of Britain's economic crisis and of the activities of the National Front, Committees against Fascism and Racism are being established in the main centres.

This short special edition of COMbat deals with some of the problems faced by socialists in the field of anti-fascist and anti-racist work.

The Communist League

The Communist League also publishes COMpass (a theoretical journal of Marxism-Leninism) and InterCOM (a journal of international news).

The next issue of COMbat will be published in October and will include articles on:

Portugal : Struggle within the National Bourgeoisie
(an analysis of events in Portugal from September 1974 to September 1975).

The "Civil Rights" Movement in the USSR
(an analysis of the political line of Andrei Sakharov).

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For THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE

SOCIALISM AND FASCISM

Socialism is the social system which will succeed capitalism. It is a social system in which the working class holds political power, in which exploitation has been abolished, in which production is planned in the interests of the working people.

The working class can gain political power only by smashing the capitalist state in a socialist revolution. The working class can carry out the socialist revolution and proceed to construct a socialist society only when it has come to accept the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party basing itself on Marxism-Leninism and free of all revisionist trends, such as maoism and trotskyism.

Now that the Communist Party of Great Britain has abandoned Marxism-Leninism to preach the revisionist illusion of "a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism" -- the dangerous illusion which led to the fascist blood-bath in Chile, it is the urgent task of socialists who understand that the only road to socialism is that of revolution to build such a Marxist-Leninist party.

Fascism is not a new social system. It is a form of capitalist state in which the democratic rights possessed by the working class under the "parliamentary democratic" form of capitalist state are forcibly suppressed. The fascist movement, basing itself on racist and nationalist prejudices, offers its services to Big Business to suppress the working class and socialist movements which threaten its profits.

Because the socialist movement in Britain is for the time being weak and disorganised, there is no need at present for Big Business to finance the fascist movement on the scale of Germany in the early 1930s. But because capitalism is a social system in decay, the growth of the socialist movement is inevitable. For this reason it is also inevitable that Big Business will eventually attempt to replace the present "parliamentary democratic" form of state by a fascist dictatorship.

Such an attempt will be made when the socialist movement has developed to the stage where it is making "parliamentary democracy", with the democratic liberties associated with it, an unsuitable form of state system for Big Business, but before it has developed to the stage where it is capable of overthrowing that state power.

For this reason, because the attempt to establish a fascist dictatorship represents a pre-emptive strike against the developing socialist movement, the socialist movement is, on its own, not capable of defeating the attempt to impose a fascist dictatorship.

Thus, in order to carry out the socialist revolution, there must be built not only the Marxist-Leninist Party and the socialist movement, but also an anti-fascist united front of a still broader nature.

Of course, both "parliamentary democracy" and fascism represent forms of what is essentially the dictatorship of Big Business. But while the fascist form of capitalist state depends primarily upon forcible repression of the working class, the "parliamentary democratic" form of capitalist state depends primarily upon deception of the working class and only secondarily upon its repression. In consequence of this distinction, the "parliamentary democratic" form of capitalist state is associated with the possession by the working class of certain democratic rights and liberties which are abolished under the fascist form.

Are these democratic rights and liberties advantageous to the development of the socialist revolution? Is it of benefit to the development of the socialist revolution that workers should be able to form legally independent organs of struggle, that a Marxist-Leninist Party should be able to publish literature and organise meetings and demonstrations legally, to stand candidates for local councils and parliament who can use the election campaigns, and the positions to which they may be elected, to expose the

evils and absurdities of capitalist society in decay and the sham nature of "parliamentary democracy"? Clearly, these democratic rights and liberties are advantageous to the development of the socialist revolution -- which, of course, is precisely why Big Business is compelled, at a certain stage in the development of the socialist movement, to strive to abolish them, to replace "parliamentary democracy" by fascism.

Thus, socialists must see the task of building an anti-fascist united front not as a diversion from the task of building the socialist movement, but AS AN ESSENTIAL ADJUNCT TO THIS LATTER TASK.

The Character of the Anti-Fascist United Front

The anti-fascist united front must be as broad as possible, embracing, so far as is possible, all persons and organisations which, irrespective of their current attitude to socialist revolution (or indeed to any other question) are prepared to participate actively in resistance to fascism.

The movement for socialism will form the most politically conscious stratum of the broader anti-fascist united front and will strive to win its leadership. In addition to their role within the anti-fascist united front, however, the socialist movement (with the Marxist-Leninist Party at its apex) must continue its own independent political activity at a higher political level.

The socialist movement will strive to lead the anti-fascist united front and its struggle in such a way that the less politically conscious members of the anti-fascist united front will have their political consciousness raised in this struggle so that the strength of the socialist movement (and, at a higher level still, of the Party) will be consistently augmented from the ranks of the anti-fascist united front. At the same time, the socialist movement will strive to lead the anti-fascist united front and its struggle in such a way that the strength of the anti-fascist united front will be consistently augmented by the recruitment of persons and organisations which were formerly neutral to, or even favourably inclined to, fascism.

While the appeal of the anti-fascist united front will be directed primarily towards the working class, members of any social class prepared to participate in organised resistance to fascism (for example, immigrant and Jewish capitalists who are likely to be the victims of fascist racial persecution along with workers) should be welcomed into membership.

The anti-fascist united front must be built first of all in the localities, and from these local anti-fascist bodies a democratic national organisation will eventually be created.

The activities of the anti-fascist united front should include marches, demonstrations, public meetings, defensive actions against fascist demonstrations, cultural events (in which anti-fascist films should play an important role) and -- of particular importance strategically -- educational classes on the nature and causes of fascism.

The Danger of "Leftism"

Because the essence of the anti-fascist united front is that it should be the broadest possible front, embracing, as far as possible, all persons and organisations prepared to participate in active resistance to fascism, a main danger to the effective building of such an anti-fascist united front comes from "leftism".

By "leftism" we mean the putting forward of a policy which actually helps the enemies of the working class in words which make it appear to be a "left" policy.

In the field of the anti-fascist movement such "leftist" policies take the form of laying down special conditions for membership of the anti-fascist united front, for example, the condition that only socialists or revolutionaries are worthy to be members of the front. The demand that the anti-fascist united front should espouse socialist aims fulfils the same function -- that of narrowing -- and so weakening -- the front.

Another "leftist" tactic is to provoke adventurist attacks upon fascist demonstrations or on the police. In present circumstances such tactics have the effect of alienating workers not yet aware of the nature of fascism or of the role of the police, these workers thus tending to see anti-fascists only as hooligans, more or less on a par with fascists.

"Leftism" can, of course, emanate from conscious traitors within the movement. But the main source of "leftism" consists of honest comrades with characteristics that make them particularly liable to fall victim to what Lenin called "the infantile disease of 'leftism'". Without this soil of honest, but mistaken, "leftists", conscious traitors are powerless to pervert the movement along "leftist" lines.

The anti-fascist movement is still at an embryonic stage. It is weak not only in the number of its members, but in the fact that a great many of these members are drawn not from industrial workers but from mental workers (on whom the influence of the petty bourgeoisie is stronger than it is upon industrial workers) and from the petty bourgeoisie itself. To defeat the danger of "leftism" in the anti-fascist movement, it is, therefore, necessary to recruit industrial workers and their organisations into the anti-fascist united front and consciously to reject the "frenzied petty-bourgeois revolutionary emotionalism" (as Lenin described it).

Conclusion

Socialists must see the building of an anti-fascist united front, not as a diversion from the task of building the socialist movement, but as an essential adjunct to it. Apart from its function of maintaining the most favourable conditions for the building of the socialist movement, the anti-fascist united front must be seen as a powerful force which, if properly led, will at a later stage merge with the socialist movement. For when Big Business makes its actual attempt to impose a fascist dictatorship, the anti-fascist united front can be transformed from a defensive movement against fascism into an offensive movement against capitalism itself.

SOCIALISTS MUST, THEREFORE, TAKE THE INITIATIVE NOT ONLY IN BUILDING THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, BUT ALSO IN BUILDING, AT A LOWER LEVEL OF POLITICAL AWARENESS, A BROAD ANTI-FASCIST UNITED FRONT.

RACISM AND THE WORKING CLASS

The working class in Britain comprises more than 80% of the population. Such a force can, if united, destroy the power of the ruling capitalist class overnight. Consequently, one of the main preoccupations of the capitalist class, and of those who serve them, is TO DIVIDE THE WORKING CLASS, to set young against old, man against woman, office worker against manual worker, Catholic against Protestant, black against white.

As decaying capitalist society staggers from one crisis to the next, the capitalist class strives to divert the wrath of the working people, who bear the main burdens of these successive crises, against a scapegoat. Before the Second World War the principal scapegoat was the Jews; today the black minority of Britain's people provides a more easily distinguishable scapegoat.

Because white workers form the majority of the British working class, the principal form of racism in Britain is white racism. But among black workers there is also black racism, which blames the even more intolerable burdens borne by them upon "whites" (including white workers). Black racism is partly a spontaneous reaction to white racism, but it is also deliberately provoked for the same purpose as is white racism.

The view sometimes put forward by black militants that black racism is not racism, but a progressive, even revolutionary, ideology, has no substance. Black racism complements white racism in its task of dividing the working

class along lines of race. ALL FORMS OF RACISM ARE PERNICIOUS AND REACTIONARY. ALL HELP THE CAPITALISTS TO "DIVIDE AND RULE".

Black militants often speak of imperialism as "white imperialism". But what does this term imply? It implies that if black capitalists are able to develop into finance capitalists, into imperialists, all will be fine. It implies that the Japanese imperialists are not enemies of the working people because their skins are not white. It suggests that imperialists behave in the barbaric way they do, not because their class position as imperialists forces them to do so, but because they are white.

It is true that the great majority of the black people of the world are oppressed by imperialism -- but so are the great majority of the white people. Whether one is a reactionary or a progressive has nothing to do with skin pigmentation. There are white revolutionaries as well as white reactionaries. There are black traitors in the service of imperialism as well as black revolutionaries.

Because the term "racism" is so repugnant, black militants who put forward anti-white policies usually express them under the name of "black nationalism".

But nationalism is the ideology of nationhood. Can it seriously be suggested that the Negroes of the United States, the Australian aborigines, the Nigerians, etc. form a single nation? Of course not. What these peoples have in common is primarily a relatively dark skin pigmentation. What they have in common is one of the factors making up what we loosely call "race". All statements which seek to associate imperialism, exploitation, oppression and reaction with skin colour are racist in character, not nationalist.

Because nationalism in certain places and at certain times (for example, in the national-liberation struggles of colonial peoples) may be progressive in character, to call what is in reality black racism by the name of "black nationalism" helps to conceal the essential ugliness of black racism beneath the cloak of a false euphemistic name.

Black militants also frequently draw attention to the positive achievements of the "Black Power" movement, particularly in the United States, in eliminating the sense of inferiority which imperialism strives to instil into the minds of black people in order to keep them in subjection, its positive achievements in making them conscious of their nobility and potential strength.

But this development is necessary among all exploited and oppressed peoples. There are "Uncle Toms" among the white working class, who still metaphorically touch their caps to the "governor".

But the negative feature of the "Black Power" movement -- and one which came increasingly to overshadow its positive side -- was that it performed this task on the basis of a policy of racial segregation, a policy not unaccompanied by the expression of anti-white racist sentiments.

The white racists of South Africa strive to maintain racial segregation, apartheid, in order to separate black workers from white, black students from white, in order to prevent united action against their common enemy. Their counterparts in the United States were objectively assisted in maintaining racial segregation in the South by those in the "Black Power" movement who demand racial segregation.

More space in this article has been devoted to black racism than to white racism, not because white racism is less pernicious or less important, but because there is more confusion among progressives on its character.

THE TASK OF THE ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, IS TO FIGHT ALL FORMS OF RACISM UNDER THE HACKNEYED AND OFTEN ABUSED -- BUT STILL VERY RELEVANT -- SLOGAN OF UNITY.