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Free Verse



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CLASS STRUGGLE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT IS JUST FINE !

In the early part of April, Rhode Island Student Movement began recognizing and analyzing its political errors committed on the local level and in terms of the national organization, American Student Movement. Since then RISM has been undergoing extensive re-organization. This statement is being issued with the realization that no progressive student organization can exist without integration with and complete reliance on the masses of students in their anti-imperialist struggles. It is necessary therefore to make public the internal struggles, criticisms and development of RISM and its relationship to building an anti-imperialist antifascist student organization in Rhode Island.

The general character of RISM work here and ASM work overall has been ultra-leftist, that is, isolated from the actual political experience of the masses of students. We have often romantically and eclectically appeared at the scene of political gatherings to stand on the sidelines shouting hollow slogans and sometimes brawling. An example of this is RISM's participation at the Newport-Nixon protest. Instead of consciously building unities between workers and intellectuals, RISM "boldly" marched to join the protesting workers carrying a portrait of Chairman Mao, remaining separate and arrogant. This activity did not serve to develop anti-imperialist struggles in R.I. because it was not in accordance with the actual conditions of minimal political unity between workers and students.

Our work often took the form of dogmatic denunciations of reactionary speakers on campus and at other functions. This was frequently done with neither the participation of fellow students nor an understanding of their actual needs. When members of RISM denounced speakers in the R.I.C. Black Studies Program they incorrectly assumed that all those students present already recognized the reactionary role of the speakers. This detachment from concrete conditions at R.I.C. and elsewhere developed into an expert and commandist approach to political work. The correct method of work would have been to actively promote discussion and criticism of the reactionary ideas being offered at the lectures. This method was seldom put into practice.

When people external to the student movement

pointed out the consequences of our erroneous methods and when we began to see the internal organizational effects of such errors, the majority of RISM became determined to rectify RISM's style of work. The majority clearly understood that to allow these errors to continue, without analyzing the growth of the incorrect left line, would seriously hinder the development of proletarian politics in Rhode Island and elsewhere. We saw that the best method for correcting the bad to bring forth the good lay in waging class struggle within the student movement. This we began to do by summing up our experiences, seeing what methods of work helped in the development of revolutionary struggles and what methods helped the hindrance of them, and finally analyzing the class basis of our actions-whether our actions are in service to the proletariat or in service to the ruling class. Class struggle within the organization comes about when disagreements arise over the concrete analysis of past errors and future practice. It is imperative that class struggle be carried out in order to settle questions of an ideological nature rather than smooth over these questions. However, a small segment of RISM, seeing their reactionary interests threatened by internal criticism, opposed this. This reactionary segment, in an attempt at liquidation, and in a thoroughly unprincipled way, gave up class struggle and split from Rhode Island Student Movement.

Political Implications of the Split

During the time of the split and up to the present, we have all been justly critical of RISM and ASM past practice. We have had much to criticize and we have benefitted much from disciplined criticism. The actions of the liquidationist group, however, showed a disregard for criticism and a breach of organizational discipline. The purpose of criticism, as Chairman Mao points out, is to analyze what was bad in the past with a scientific attitude so that work in the future will be done more carefully and done better.

OUR AIM IN EXPOSING ERRORS AND CRITICIZING SHORTCOMINGS, LIKE THAT OF A DOCTOR CURING A SICKNESS, IS SOLELY TO SAVE THE PATIENT AND NOT TO DOCTOR HIM TO DEATH.

Rather than criticize RISM's past errors to strengthen the organization the liquidationist group chose to criticize the organization in an attempt to destroy it. At a time when a majority of the members of RISM understood why the critical method of resolving the contradictions within the movement was necessary, the reactionary minority broke discipline, opposing the decision by walking away from it.

Fearing genuine criticism, the liquidationists concocted phoney criticisms of the organization such as: "RISM is a bureaucracy. Class struggle cannot go on in a bureaucracy. Therefore we are leaving RISM. This, however, is not liquidation." Such an analysis is riddled with contradictions. Bureaucratic tendencies in any progressive organization should always be criticized and struggled over. However, the renegades thought it necessary to only mention bureaucracy and to cease struggle around this point. The analysis "class struggle cannot go on in a bureaucracy" is hopelessly apolitical. It implies that class struggle cannot be waged in a bureaucratic-ally structured society (the U.S. for instance). In the face of the rising tide of world revolution the bourgeoisie and its agents will foolishly proclaim: "there is no class struggle!"

Not only were the departed comrades despicable in their breach of discipline and in their shoddy and apolitical analysis of the situation, they were completely subjective in their method of criticizing RISM. Refusing to see their own role in creating the errors, they remained in an abstract and subjective sense entirely "correct". The problem, they held, was "out there" and not contained in their own methods of work.

To say there is no class struggle when, in reality, two classes exist and are in struggle; to say that splitting from a progressive organization is not an attempt at liquidation; to refuse to admit to one's errors by correcting them - these are all manifestations of anti-consciousness. Anti-consciousness is the refusal to understand what exactly one is doing. The actions of the renegades are based in anti-consciousness.

One Divides Into Two

Two contradictory aspects-or lines-exist in everything. These lines are in constant struggle. In time, thru struggle, one line defeats the other and a new phase of unity is achieved. Again, within this unity, two lines become apparent, come into contradiction, struggle against one another, until a still newer phase of unity is achieved. The dialectical process continues thusly.

The two lines in the world today are the bourgeois reactionary line of the imperialists and the proletarian revolutionary line of the working and oppressed people. This is a class contradiction and is reflected in any progressive organization. Within an organization two opposing forces emerge and struggle ensues. This is a healthy state of affairs. If an organization is to be disciplined in actually leading revolutionary struggles it must understand and welcome this dialectical working of things: it must encourage class struggle within the organization.

The events of the last weeks have unified the present RISM constituency in support of the slogan: CLASS STRUGGLE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT IS JUST FINE! This slogan crystallizes the universality of struggle and the dialectics of nature and society.

We are definitely optimistic in our recent victory over petty bourgeois and counter-revolutionary class interest within the student movement. We will carry the victory further in smashing the remnants of this aspect of the reactionary line. We must do this as part of rectification. But this alone is not sufficient. In order that RISM become a material force in R.I. class struggle is vigorously being carried on internally in order to develop an analysis and political program that can serve the needs of students in their active struggle against U.S. Imperialism and imperialist oppression in the universities and schools.

The Rhode Island Student Movement generally opposes such actions as the recent events in Washington. The situation in America today is one in which revolutionary sentiment among students must be consciously built over a long period of time in support of the working and oppressed people's struggles. Tactics such as trying to "stop" Washington, trying to appeal to the sensibilities of the U.S. Imperialists through peaceful demonstrations and trying to instigate revolutionary struggles overnight are all idealistic notions resulting from an incorrect analysis of the situation in the U.S. today. The task of a student movement, therefore, is to provide students with an anti-imperialist, anti-fascist organization and strategy that develops protracted struggle against imperialist ideology in the classroom and fascist methods of university and school administration. We are confident that through disciplined and responsible class struggle RISM can carry out this task.