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Editorial

Socialist Industrialisation: Tanks or Class

This paper has been put together by members of a seminar on Socialist Development held at Sussex in the Spring of 1979. One issue discussed at the seminar was the tendency for the division of intellectual and manual labour - so characteristic of Western capitalist society - to be carried over into socialist countries. For example academics in universities have tended to speak to themselves, on subjects which have little relevance to the conditions of working people, or which reflect the concerns of the rulers not the ruled. Although there were many differences of opinion in the seminar, one point was shared: that our discussions should not be privatised, that we should look at problems not from the top (the state) but from underneath (labour), and that we should where possible break down the private language to which all academics are prone. So in addition to the edited results of the conference, we decided to try and practise what we preach, and produce something less formidable than a book, something which gave a flavour of the debates, and something which offered those whose work effectively financed the seminar a chance to criticise the relevance of what has taken place. The result is this paper - produced over one week-end - and offered here - warts and all.

There have been four main points to have emerged from the seminar:

1. Post-revolutionary socialist societies are to be distinguished from capitalist ones (including social democracies) by the destruction of the autonomous political power of private capital which a revolution brings about. It is a political distinction, emphasising the differences in relative class power, rather than an economic one concerned with differences between market and plan.

2. Socialist relations develop before a revolution, just as capital developed in the womb of feudalism. The Owenites or the early co-op movement in Britain showed us new forms of associated labour. We may call them 'pre-figurative forms', zones of autonomy thrown up against the force of capital. More recently, liberation movements in the 3rd world have developed geographical zones of autonomy, in the liberated areas, and have built new forms of socialist relations before state power is seized. Indeed the very dependence of guerilla armies on the people, the effective absence of the power to tax and conscript which the capture of state power confers, means that it is in liberated zones and in liberation armies that the most inventive and democratic forms of new social relations are to be found. Viewed in this way, neither party nor army can be seen solely as instrumental in capturing state power. They also contain social relations, and the relations of post-revolutionary society will depend in part on the character of the movement that led the revolution. The question is not simply whether the revolution is made but how it is made.

From Ajit Singh's talk to the seminar:

The first major reason for industrialisation in the third world is national independence - survival. Survival requires that we industrialise these economies very quickly. The question is how you go about industrialising. If I thought it were the case that it could come about through capitalism then I would be quite happy to go along the capitalist road. My analysis of industrialisation in other countries in the present world situation is that it cannot come about except through socialism, on the basis of an alliance between the working class and the peasantry. That is the essential condition. In the past countries like Japan industrialised through exploiting the peasantry, and the Soviet Union too. That is no longer feasible in the 3rd world today. What these countries need to do is to raise the share of industry in total output to 30-35% from its current level of 15-17%. This would be greatly impeded if only the cities were able to develop or if only a small elite got the benefits. We need to make sure that there is a relative equality of sacrifices, in particular by those in the country and those in the cities.

What you require is state control of resources, and state control over the development of technological forces. Only in this way can you close the technological gap. And to catch up you need a Marxist Leninist disciplinarian party.

It is not a question of whether we want this road or that road. The type of industrialisation is not a choice that is open to us. It is the industrialisation which the Western world has brought about, with which go all the development of the means of war, the means of subjugation. Unless and until we have those means we have no way of ensuring national survival.

Take a country like Tanzania for example. I do not accept that tanks are not on the agenda for them. I think they are. They have to be. Why should Tanzania not be able to develop tanks and produce weapons? At a purely technical level if you can produce tanks you can also produce other

things. Once you have the technical capacities then an industrialised state can meet the basic needs of the people and it can also wage wars. You can only get national independence in that sense. Arms are the one way in which imperialist countries always keep you under domination. Until we have total world disarmament and total world socialism I'm afraid these things are inevitable.

A RESPONSE

In order to stimulate a wider debate my approach to socialist industrialisation can be put in the form of these:

1. until now the economists have given a very general definition to the process of industrialisation. This definition when it is not purely tautological can be summarised as "a set of technical changes in the labour process which correspond to an increase in the productivity of labour."
2. these definitions which attempt to isolate technical or material characteristics of the labour process from the social conditions within which this labour process operates are basically general growth theories such as those developed by Lewis or Rostow.
3. for Marx, it is the dominant relations of production under which labour operates, which defines labour and explains its rhythm and the course of its development. The capitalist division of labour, technical progress, and the extension of capital on a world scale, all have a point of departure and as a condition of existence the materialisation of the capital relation, which has become a relation of production.
4. the reproduction and extension of this relation of production takes place through class struggle in production: the struggle of the bourgeoisie to separate day by day the workers from themselves and from the means of production, and the struggle of the working class to oppose and resist this attack by capital. Furthermore the units of production in their material form of individual

capitals are separated from each other (concentration/competition). One can therefore speak of a double separation characteristic of the capitalist mode of production.

5. To the extent that historically there has never been a way of industrialising other than capitalism, the general concept of industrialisation sends us back to the process of the concrete realisation of this double separation. Such a concept obscures, like the general concepts of classical political economy, the real forces in operation.

6. Instead of defining a socialist industrialisation with ungraspable concept I suggest an approach of analysing specific contradictions which appear in the course of the process of industrialisation put into practise but also transformed by a state controlled by and issued from classes which paradoxically have always been the victims of industrialisation. (But let us make sure at this point that in these concrete cases the state don't represent the working class and peasantry.)

7. The necessity of industrialisation should be established in a concrete manner. It is not sufficient to cry that the nation is in danger in order to claim immediately the necessity of tanks. In the same way the worker-peasant alliance should be constructed in the conditions of concrete struggle. This can not be a pious wish. Marxists forget too often that the bourgeoisie is more Marxist than itself. The class struggle is its daily bread. It knows how to draw the lessons of experience to the extent that it prefers most of the time not to intervene militarily but to find other more subtle forms of domination. In Vietnam, Angola the direct intervention of imperialism became an obligation after the failure of puppet governments. And one knows that such governments long to construct tanks - in fact for whom are the tanks in South Korea, in Bresil?

8. There are other necessities in industrialisation: to consolidate the worker-peasant alliance, to cease to depend on the so-called division of labour, no longer to have a 'disarticulated' economy and so on. These necessities are subordinated to the fact that what is decisive, for the long and the medium term, is to know how the oppressed have taken power, and how they have faced contradictions inherent in the particular processes of industrialisation which until now have always tended to expel them from this same power.

a capital letter

Dear Mr Capital,

Throughout this Seminar we have argued about who you are. The numerous forms you take in different periods, different historical epochs, different countries and different socio-economic and political units made it a bit difficult for us to reach a consensus. In one form you are Owm. You call for those who are exploited to join hands with you in building a happier nation. You create an infrastructure for a welfare state and allow Trade Unions and other political parties to act as safety valves in case you are faced with a revolution. You turn Trade Unions and Workers'

Organisations into "Oliver Twists" who keep on begging, "Please Sir, we want some more". You beat up these "Oliver Twists" or you warn them or sometimes you summon all your representatives to a Board meeting. These representatives claim in horror, "SOME MORE! DID WE HEAR SOME MORE? UNBELIEVABLE!"

Mr. Capital, you surely did wonders in some countries, which for your own purposes you designated as the Third World Countries. When you were crude and unsophisticated, you acted in a very uncivilised manner in pirating, conquering and colonising these countries through military force. Then you were nicknamed 'Colonialism'. As you were very primitive, you faced wars of liberation. As you had matured you decided to show you

were tough while at the same time preparing for your directors to take over these countries. How grand were these occasions of celebration of your exit! Independence after all had come. You were amused to see these nationalists enjoying having

What drove me to write this paper was the result of the discussions we had with the representatives of Feminist Movements in Britain. Though there are many positive aspects of this struggle: I see more important negative aspects when the question of the Liberation of Women is considered from a historical/political point of view.

The appearance of the women's movement to fight for the rights of the woman in capitalist society is a progressive step. The crisis of capitalism brings misery to the working people. In this process both men and women are affected and it is true that women are more affected than men. Being unable to bear up the burden the woman demands the control of the basic biological function of the woman - pro-creation. The capitalist class recognise this demand of the women for control of procreation and utilize this to sharpen the division between men and women so that the working class struggle will be weakened which in turn will help them to continue their class rule of exploitation. A massive drive to control population is undertaken by the bourgeois state. Women especially the feminists become the unfortunate victims of this vicious campaign of the capitalist class.

The main idea of propagation of birth control methods by the capitalist states is to limit the expansion of population in order to maintain and increase their profits. The feminist movement does not recognise this fact. Instead they react in a negative manner. Male chauvinism is bad and wrong. But female chauvinism is not the solution. This is equally bad and wrong.

Struggle for socialism is the first major step in the direction of removing social oppression. Women's liberation is also embodied in this struggle. In political struggle it is important to identify the basic major contradiction in society. The unity of men and women is very important to fight to resolve the main contradiction which is imperialism and capitalism. This in no way undermines the other contradictions in society. Abolition of private property is the major task of the day.

Women have gone to the other extreme of hysterical female chauvinism which has gone to the extent of undermining the most important biologic function of the woman reproduction. Let me explain this more clearly. In the evolution of human species the propagation of the species depend primarily on procreation. Without the man, woman cannot exist - and vice versa. This is the basic unity of the opposites like the negative and positive poles of a magnet. Men (and of course women) are a social being and the society developed due to the development of productive forces. The most important productive force is the human being itself. If this is not created as the feminists demand, labour power will disappear and with this whole production and therefore the society will come to a stand still! Do they realize that they are demanding their own extinction? This is the tragedy of the autonomous feminist movement.

Unless the feminist movement realize the importance of the political struggle to fight the common enemy - capitalism - to establish socialism which will for the first time in human history lay the foundation for complete liberation of the woman. Such a society will work to employ all men and women on equal basis, socialise domestic work, open up child care centres and help the women to plan the family (of course not to stop procreation!) There is no doubt that new contradictions will arise which will be mainly non-antagonistic contradictions that can be easily resolved. This process will continue until the communist society and beyond. The oppression of the woman that lasted for thousands of years cannot be undone overnight.

we cannot make generalisation here as the man and woman who will look into each others eyes with a sense of equality and true love will develop its own code of morality which will be most beneficial to the functioning of the new society.

DEATH TO IMPERIALISM - LIBERATION TO PEOPLE
DEATH TO CAPITALISM - VICTORY TO SOCIALISM
VICTORY TO SOCIALISM- LIBERATION TO WOMEN
DEATH TO FEMALE CHAUVINISM - LIBERATION TO MEN
PROLETARIANS OF ALL LANDS UNITE!!

This article makes some criticisms of Western feminism which I will argue are unjustifiable. The author recognises that women are more affected by the crisis of capitalism than are men. Unfortunately he does not elaborate on this but turns to what he sees as the basic biological functions of women - procreation. He suggests that working women demand the control of this their basic function because they are deluded by capitalist propaganda which is part of a "vicious campaign of population control." So Western feminists are for him doing modern capitalism's dirty work.

Our recent history totally contradicts this assertion. The capitalist state has been very reluctant to grant the right to women to control their own bodies. In Britain abortion cannot be had on demand. The ruling classes see this right as a short cut to weakening the race, to the dying out of the British stock, as an intolerable reversal of the 'natural order of things'. It is not without irony that the author's arguments so chillingly echo those of his supposed enemies.

Working class women have had to wage a tremendous struggle in this country to gain the same right to birth control as wealthier women. The Women's Movement has joined in this struggle to have all women's right to contraceptive knowledge and indeed to abortion recognised as a right and not as a concession. It has also fought for the right for women to have as many children as they want. Thus they have fought for more creches, and more nurseries. They have demanded that women have adequate conditions under which to have children. These demands are not made purely in a reformist spirit; but rather because it is recognised that the capitalist system is not capable of providing such conditions and that our demands thus undermine it.

Feminists would agree with the author that human beings are central, but unlike him they do not see them as merely 'labour power'. They are people with capacities and creativities. For feminists birth control for women is an essential element in a woman's capacity to plan her own development, for allowing her to be creative rather than being remorselessly tied to the treadmill of her biology. The author has chosen to

forget, conveniently, that wide knowledge about and use of birth control does not of itself limit family size. Families have always tried to control not so much the number of children but the spacing between them, so that each child when born is granted the best conditions possible to develop. Only through birth control can a woman guarantee that she will not have to bear a child every 12 to 18 months only to see that child die from malnutrition, sickness or lack of care because its mother is overburdened, physically exhausted and debilitated from a remorseless regime of pregnancy, lactation, and pregnancy again.

What the Women's Movement is demanding is safer contraceptive technology which does not depend on intervening in the hormonal balance of the body. They welcome techniques like those developed in China that allow women to ensure that every pregnancy carried to term is a wanted pregnancy. In this country such methods are rejected by most of the medical profession. Doctors feel threatened by the loss of authority and control that this implies (quite apart from loss of profits). Their arguments are couched in paternalistic terms: that women are too devoid of sense to be able to make wise decisions about when they want to have children; that they are emotional and easily taken in by even the most absurd propaganda. Strikingly many of the author's views are identical to those of reactionary doctors in this country. If women chose to have fewer children (the classic male obsession shared by the author of the article) it is because the objective conditions for joyous motherhood are not given by the society - the drudgery of the double working day, of being a second class citizen, of being squeezed by our condition into the background of political movements, of raising children only to see them swept away in internecine struggles between male dominated nations.

The feminist movement has long since realised the importance of the political struggle against capitalism. What they deny is the right of male revolutionaries to dictate what political struggle is. The Movement has progressed beyond the simplistic mouthings against private property, and naive hopes that unequal relations between men and women will somehow be righted in a form of society in which the private appropriation of means of production is superceded by their appropriation in the name of the people.

A VIEW FROM THE THIRD-WORLD

Since women are part of the oppressed masses we could not do other than be concerned with the women's question in the construction of socialism, the question is how?, let us look briefly at some concrete experiences. In Cuba there has been a major concern through the Federacion de Mujeres de Cuba, a mass organization which deals with particular issues of women as well as with their political education.

In other third world countries, FRELIMO Mozambique, SWAPO-Namibia and EPLF - Eritrea, examples of deep political involvement of women, women can be seen to be active in the national liberation of their societies, but women's issues are defined and dealt with in a wide variety of ways e.g. aiming at the incorporation of women in production, establishing a new "revolutionary morale" in regards to sexual relations, sharing domestic work, etc.

It has been argued that this participation would go on just while there is a 'need' for political support, just as women are urged to participate in production because there is need for labour force. This idea of "instrumentalization" of women, although useful as a warning for the construction of the new society, is false in the sense that it disregards completely the fact that women themselves are committed to the overall struggle. They tend to see this from extreme positions, either skeptically or as exceptions.

What I would like to emphasize here is the following:

a. if such a "vanguard" of women are involved in the overall struggle, one should expect that at a particular situation this means not only her commitment to a "general" cause but also a commitment to the way in which women issues are seen as particular issues linked to the overall struggle.

b. in addition, this is also a challenge since as there is a major involvement of women in the struggle for liberation this must also be so in the construction of the new society.

In this sense, one should rather ask how does or does not this link appear in the experience of the European Feminist Movement. Still, there are some previous questions to discuss, what are women's issues and what is feminism? What we want to point out is the relation between the development of feminism and women's issues in third world countries. One will find that women's issues have mainly been defined through the experience of European countries. At a certain moment they were identified with the campaign for equal rights (voting for example), later with the double-working day and the sexual subordination of women. Since, the less developed countries are not isolated from the development of different streams of thought, women's issues and feminism were already discussed early this century in some of the third world coun-

tries, as it happened in Latin America. However, in spite the theoretical discussion on feminism in regards to domestic labour, there is a risk to apply this discussion (in European terms) to other societies.

One could argue that division of labour by gender or sexual subordination of women are common issues to all women. Although this is so in the abstract, actually in a social confrontation as in the class struggle in Chile, women do not escape taking one side or the other.

Even sexual subordination of women in some countries might appear mediated by religion or crudely as sexual violation, rebellion of women against religious traditions in such societies (e.g. Iran), might be much more important elements of consciousness of women oppression than issues of domestic labour, etc. In addition to this, women's organizations, in many capitalist underdeveloped countries have tried to present women's issues as non-political. In those cases what is defined as "feminism" plays a role not only in favour of the status quo but also against women's interests.

In capitalist underdeveloped countries the basis for feminist movements is mostly middle class. Since the relations of exploitation are so acute and transparent, the women's movement, if is a "revolutionary" force it could hardly remain isolated from other social conflicts. What it is important

here is to emphasize that the question is which are the forms in which women engage themselves in political practice and how and when are women's issues felt to be a major demand by them.

The Unveiling

Is there an 'I' and 'you', a 'he' and 'she' Capital declines us so from day to day; Individuals all; only a 'we' When it is in their interest: war, and work and play.

Such social gatherings are arranged with care; No unions at the front, no talking there; In factories each pocket of the day Should be concerned not with collective action but individual pay.

It was not always so; in labour's dream There are succeeding moments that we all have made; The Paris Commune, 1917, When many changed to one united blade.

Then we tear off our veils, each have our say, Arrange our lives together in our way, Work not to feed myself, for her or him, But for us all, labour's universal kin.

SOCIALISM IN LABOUR

The following is an attempt at understanding the character and nature of socialist countries "as they exist". The object is neither taxonomy nor moral judgement, but the analysis of the material basis of the social relations which are reproduced within these societies. One way of approaching this analysis is through studying the wage-relation as it manifests itself.

I. THE WAGE-FORM IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

In "socialist countries as they exist", wage labour and the wage-relation have not been abolished. Yet, one of the objectives of socialist transformation (implicitly or explicitly stated) is the elimination of the wage-system and its replacement by the principle of distribution according to "needs". Why have the "socialist" societies not broken away from the wage-system? What is the role and function of wage-labour in these societies? Is it possible to conceptualise a transition away from the wage-system?

A. Form and content of the wage-relation in capitalist and socialist societies

On the one hand, both form (exchange of individual labour power against individual wage) and content (division of labour, fragmentation of the labour process, atomisation of the worker, expropriation of the worker from the control of his production...) of wage-labour appear identical or very similar in "socialist" and capitalist societies.

On the other hand, in capitalist societies, the non-producing classes appropriate surplus through profit, interest or rent, whereas in the "socialist" societies, they (identified for the moment as "bureaucracy" and "technocracy") do so partly through the wage. In capitalist societies, wage-labour provides a distinction between the bourgeoisie and the producers. In socialist societies, the relation between ruling classes and the producers is masked by the same wage-relation, which reduces everyone in the society to mere wage-earners.

Both the similarity and difference of wage-labour contribute to decreasing the control of workers over their production in socialist societies.

B. "To each according to his labour"...

One of the characteristics of wage-labour which remains is "wage-differentials". This is conceptualised by the principle: "to each according to his labour", generally put forward as a non-problematic "socialist principle".

Skilled labour is considered to create more value than unskilled labour; consequently, if the above principle is applied correctly, skilled workers should be paid more.

Apart from the fact that the above principle is used to legitimate the position and interest of the ruling classes, it can also be criticised from a theoretical point of view :- a socialist principle is not a dogma, but one which enables changes (both practically and conceptually). It is also possible to argue that there is a parallel between this principle and "human capital theory" as developed by neoclassical economics. However, in the West, the above principle is posed as a law. -The principle is relevant only to commodity producing societies. This is so, not because skilled labour is more productive, but because in this type of societies, skills which are socially required appear only as the property of individual "skilled workers". In the former, everyone is considered to be a worker, whereas in the latter, everyone is considered to be a capitalist. In both cases, the existence of different class interests are denied although in different ways.

If these differences are recognised, then one is led to question the principle "each according to his labour" and to attempt to conceptualise a breaking away from the wage-system.

C. A tentative alternative to the individual wage relation

Breaking with the relation between an individual worker and an individual wage may take several forms. One alternative may be to remunerate the total labour of a local community to the community as a whole. It is the community which then decides on the internal distribution of the total revenue within the community according to its needs.

In this way, the worker ceases to be a mere wage-labourer, a simple bearer of labour power, but identifies himself directly socially.

Furthermore, the power of the associated producers is increased; this, of course, is in contradiction with the dominant view of socialism as the increasing control over every aspect of everyday life by the "State controlled by the Party".

It is precisely the breaking away from this conception of socialism, which enables conceptualising a transition away from the wage system. It should be noted that in the above alternative, as long as the community is considered as an association of wage-labourers, rather than an association of producers, the chance of consolidating the transition are very low. The "failures" and "successes" of the Chinese communes or of agricultural cooperatives illustrate this point as well as its insufficient recognition.

II. TECHNOCRACY AND BUREAUCRACY.

What is the nature of the "ruling classes" in "existing socialist societies"? What is the material basis for both their unity and distinctions?

1.

One of the distinctions which can be observed is that between the "bureaucracy" and the "technocracy". They can be distinguished by two elements:

- the way they appropriate the social product for consumption,
- the nature of their control over the process of production.

A. Privileges and perquisites.

On the one hand, both bureaucracy and technocracy appropriate social product in the form of privileges and perquisites (p&p) over and above the "wage". - the existence of p&p. contributes to the lowering of the "official" wage-differential. - its mere existence and increasing prevalence expresses a class-relation. - the necessity to present everyone as a "wage-labourer" makes it necessary for these classes to appropriate social product in the form of p&p. On the other hand, the p&p. of the technocracy are tied to their position within the productive unit, while those of the bureaucracy come from their position within the State/Party.

B. The control of production.

Taylorism, the scientific and technological revolution together contribute to the concentration of control within the production unit into the hands of what has been called the "technocracy".

In socialist societies, the distribution of surplus (thus, the forms of accumulation) and the relations between different productive units are controlled by the "bureaucracy". Therefore, for any production to become social, it must pass through the hands of the bureaucracy.

2.

In capitalist societies, the productive units and the "technocracy" which controls them are subordinated to finance capital through the mobility of capital expressed by the stock exchange and the banks.

By contrast, in socialist societies, if a mobility of capital exists at all, it is necessarily subordinated to the "bureaucracy".

In the present situation, one can observe a certain number of growing contradictions within the structural relations described above. One of these is the attempt to restrict the mobility of "capital" and at the same time to increase the role of money (as distinct from money-capital). A second one seems to be the question of the "productivity of labour" which seems to become a major problem in these societies. Firstly, these societies conceive the entire process of socialist development as a process of increasing the forces of production.

Secondly, from the standpoint of the increase of productive forces only, it is not at all obvious that the restriction on the mobility of "capital" is more effective than the process of monopolisation.

The relations between the bureaucracy and the technocracy is of a complex nature. On the one hand, there is an attempt at the unification of both as a "ruling class" through both interpenetration and mutual concessions (e.g. the economic reforms since 1965). On the other hand, the struggle between them is an uneven one because the technocracy cannot express its collective interest (both from a material and ideological point of view) except through the bureaucracy.

Socialism and Beyond.

We are in the seventh decade since the establishment of socialism as a social system. Its coming promised not only the abolition of inequalities among people but also the absence of wars and national animosities. It promised a world of abundance and also the creation of the heavens here on the earth, where we would all be not only masters, but there would be no Metropolitan Police, GIs, KGB or Lord Denning.

1. What happened to the Ideals?

What happened since then? Vietnam and China are at war. The Soviet State today is as powerful as any big capitalist state, with all the necessary organs of statehood. Unemployment has hit Socialist Yugoslavia. And the East German intelligence network, in its recent penetrations of the FRG society, has shown itself to be as vicious as any other security organ of the western governments.

Is this the utopia that Marx and Lenin had in mind? Or did something go wrong on the way? The Trotskyists would say that the Thermidor started in 1924, others would say that it started in 1948 when Stalin decided to teach a lesson to his Yugoslav prodigal son, but the Maoists believe that it started with the "Secret Speech". Whenever it may have started, one has to explain - why?

2. The creation of a new, socialist man

But that is the naive way of looking at the whole problem. When the attack on the Winter Palace took place, capitalism had already existed for over five hundred years. In those five centuries it had inculcated slavery and also feudal values and ideas. Those were reflected not only in social relations but in personal ones too. Except for the short period of the Paris Commune, the working class did not enter even the corridors of power let alone the centres. 1917 only ushered the beginning of the long road towards a society of each according to his needs. The

achievement of that goal not only demands the creation of abundance, but most importantly the transformation of man himself into a new, socialist man.

3. The problems

One had hoped that Pavel Korchagin was not just the civil war phase of the Soviet Revolution or that the two million Chinese in Korea were not just the symptom of the phase when the Chinese Revolution was still in its infancy. Today, apart from Cuba, one has to ask where those socialist internationalists are those that were in Spain in the thirties, the Bolivian mountains in the sixties and the African jungles in the seventies.

A black sage once said: the struggle of the twentieth century is the struggle for minds. Unless this is taken seriously within the socialist countries, we might live to see the rolling back of socialism à la Foster Dulles, and both 1956 and 1968 would only be a child's play.

4. The lessons

It is difficult to predict what would happen in 2017 when socialism would be celebrating its 100th birthday. But if there are any lesson to be learned then it is the fact that material wellbeing has to go hand with ideological firmness. Otherwise, somebody from the so-called Third World can surely ask: what is the difference between the land of Lenin and that of Lincoln? After all, aren't both of them superpowers?

All countries will arrive to socialism-each at its own pace. But when Nepal and Chad come to socialism, they would want to make sure that they would be able to withstand the imperialist onslaught and blockade. Imperialism then would be more ferocious because it would be defending its last outposts. But would there then be a socialist Cuba or a democratic Vietnam? Or would we have noticed the restoration of capitalism in Albania and Korea and the turning of both into social imperialists?

Workers in Classrooms

The Northern College (Barnsley)

The courses are designed specifically to meet the needs of people who, having suffered alienation, characteristic of all people employed by capital, now want to act and deepen their talents. Thus the courses have a definite objective of arousing hidden talents and creativity coupled with inculcating a critical attitude towards life and exploration of possible areas of development. Apart from short courses offered to workers from various industries, there are long courses of 1 and 2 years. At present the college has three main courses in: Trade Union and Industrial Studies, Local and Community

Studies and Gateway or Liberal Studies. Each of these courses is geared towards bringing together various disciplines and skills relevant to students' experiences. Upon completion of the course students are free to return to their former employment with a new vigour or join other areas where they feel they can contribute better, in their job and in their local community. In order that students can benefit from their courses a one term preparatory course is set to widen their horizon in academic work and methods of study. A certificate or diploma is awarded. Finally a few places are reserved for grant-aided students from overseas

A Doctor says...

As a Doctor working in a major Third World hospital, I come across patients of all walks of life. The majority of people who come to government hospitals are poor and belong to the lower socio-economic groups. Although they are very shy about the poverty to which they are subjected, they cannot hide it from me because the state of their health immediately rings a bell in my ear. Almost all of them are anaemic and are the victims of communicable diseases e.g. Tuberculosis, Malaria, Bowel Infections, Worm Infections etc. Almost all these diseases are associated with the poor living conditions of these people. They live in badly ventilated, unprotected houses under the most unhygienic conditions. The drinking water is not pure. The waste is not disposed of properly, the environment is full of flies, mosquitos etc., and finally there is an acute shortage of food. Children die of malnutrition - the milk foods are very expensive and the poor people cannot afford them. The mothers who have many children to look after are the last in the house to eat; she herself being malnourished and anaemic is unable to breast feed the new born baby because the breasts dry up early. I was very sensitive to this situation in the hospital where I worked I thought I could correct it - at least in my ward, so I started caring and serving the poor, sick people most. While the rich man with a negligible sickness gets a bed in the ward, the poor man with heart failure was under the bed. I corrected this. To all the malnourished and anaemic patients I gave a high protein diet and whenever necessary I gave vitamins and blood transfusions. Then I discovered a massive pilferage of drugs. While poor patients suffer due to lack of drugs, these drugs are pilfered by organised racketeers who are powerful politicians. They are the people who rule the country. I did not know this. I tried to prevent this drug pilferage because I felt so sorry for the poor patients. When I was doing this I found that my colleagues and my superiors as well as the Administrators became critical of me. For them the patient is a 'case', but not a human being living in society. The social inequality outside the hospital undermines treatment in other ways. I shall give a classical example - a TB patient, a man who comes to hospital is treated with the most expensive drugs and clinically cured, and then the doctor tells him "You can go home, eat good food: eggs, milk, fish, beef etc, sleep 8 hours and do not do hard work". The patient is expected to continue therapy for two years. Unfortunately, how many doctors realise that this is a poor man with a wife and children to look after. Until he came home from hospital, they are starving in the small shanty where they live. In most cases, many of them are also infected with the disease. This sick man who comes home feels so sad at the plight of his wife and children, he starts working. He gets reinfected from the other members of the family. He is forced to discontinue the medicine because in many instances he has no money to travel to hospital. This goes on until he breaks down again and is rushed to hospital, and this vicious circle continues. This is the tragedy of poverty.

When I tried to do my best as an individual, I was victimised because I came to clash with the

vested interests like pilferage of drugs. What do they do next? They label me a Communist, a Che Guevarist, and give false information to the police to arrest me. They bribed the police to kill me. I am arrested by police, tortured and kept in jail for nearly three years. Only in jail did I come to realise that it's the Social System that is responsible for poverty and its consequences. We live in a Capitalist society where a very small minority own the entire wealth of the society. This is a profit-motivating society where there is corruption, briber nepotism everywhere. It is an organised system of exploitation of men by men. I alone cannot correct or change this. As an individual I am helpless. Oppressed people have to be organised - I must identify myself with the oppressed and fight for them i.e. to change the social system. This is the fundamental basic and the most important task to which I must dedicate myself in my short span of existence. This is how I came to believe in the Revolution. Then in jail I met the Revolutionaries who are dedicated to this. They tell one of the necessity of studying social science, political science, philosophy, economics to understand the functioning of society. The logical conclusion of these studies led me to Marxism. Here we find the method of changing society.

Film Review: The Deer Hunter

I would like to analyse the film at two levels:
1/ the level of facts and information, given by the author and director, with regard to both American society and Vietnam.
2/ the message the film is trying to impart.

One interesting fact is that the film never discusses the origin of U.S. army involvement in Vietnam, this is simply treated as a fact! Implicit in the film is a view of American GI's having mysteriously inherited the role of defending Vietnamese widows and orphans against the "Vietcong", yet it is never asked where these widows and orphans come from. The film deliberately ignores the facts that more bombs were dropped in Vietnam war than in the two world wars, that millions of hectares of rice fields and forest were defoliated, that millions of human beings were killed and mutilated that hundreds of thousands of widows, orphans and prostitutes were created by the war and that all these deep social wounds were inflicted by the US on Vietnamese society. It shows the consequences for some GI's but does not tell how the Vietnamese are still living with the devastation and the unhealed wounds of American aggression.

Fiction of fact: the film shows the "Viet congs" playing the game of Russian roulette, they are shown gambling with men's lives for money and inhumanly torturing their prisoners. For those who know anything about Vietnamese history and the Vietnamese people, it is impossible to recognise this picture of monkeys with a blood lust who have a total disregard for human life as Vietnamese soldiers fighting to liberate their country. It is a particularly interesting image that the director has of the Vietnamese people. In the many films made by the Americans in the psychological war to justify their involvement and action in Vietnam the image is the same: the Vietnamese are inhuman animals.

The film hero's are "typical" American workers who are characterised as a-political beings who move through life, loving, drinking, hunting and working, untroubled by thoughts about the world outside their immediate experience. This image is continually reinforced by the dialogue which shows these workers to have a restricted descriptive vocabulary. For these workers the slogan "For God and Country" is apparently sufficient motivation in itself to go to Vietnam, become a hero and die!

I would argue it is no accident that these "typical" workers are the film's hero's, they are also "America's silent majority". The fact that the anti-war movement was started and fuelled by intellectuals and students may account for their absence in the story. By exclusively picking out these "typical" workers, the film totally ignores the millions who were the "non-silent minority", those who deserted, those who burned their draft cards, those who demonstrated, the many who were and, are still, ostracised by "Decent America".

The most interesting part of the film for me, was the characterisation of the "silent majority". In the community that gave birth to our hero's, human relationships are poor, in the eyes of people one reads sadness, violence is smoldering, the presence of male chauvinism is strongly felt, and the concept of human dignity is absent. If this is a true picture of the U.S. society then America is very sick indeed!

The message is clear: look at our brave boys, our honest workers, so friendly, good drinkers and jokers, just like any of us. In that place called Vietnam they discovered violence, savagery and cruelty for the first time. They were taught about these inhuman qualities not only by the enemy but also by "loyal" Vietnamese and Chinese alike, indeed all the "Asian" characters depicted in the film.

Our boys who returned are either, or both, psychologically and physically scared by their experiences. The shocking death of a friend, spurting blood in a smoky gambling den in Saigon is, for the survivors, a purification, after which they can forget and push out of their lives the memory of their Vietnamese nightmare.

In brief the film implies that the "silent majority" is right to go to Vietnam, it learns there the lessons of cruelty and violence but "God bless America", through the sacrifice of its children America is able to regain its peace and serenity!

letter-contd.

overthrown your 'nickname' - colonialism while you left intact - (by the way, you are nicknamed 'Imperialism, Neo-colonialism, International Capital ..etc., as you well know).

Mr Capital, in countries like Britain, the U.S. and Germany, you are able to cope with "Oliver Twists". Is it because this is where your relatives are? In a number of poorer countries, the leaders have attempted to use whatever little you have given them to distribute to their countrymen. These leaders are not the "Oliver Twists" of the Welfare States, but "Robin Hoods". The motto, Mr Capital, as you know is to take away from those who have it by those who have power and give it to those whom they think are needy. The procedure in some of these countries is: Nationalise the economy; then Ugandanise it (but there are people of different nationalities - Africans, British, Americans, Chinese, Indians); to deal with this problem Africanise and de-Indianise the economy; then patronise and finally 'militarise' it.

But Mr. Capital, let us give the devil its due. You have done wonders in connection with the above. How many countries have gone through the process of nationalisation-denationalisation-nationalisation-denationalisation. You are a real genius. Your D. Phil dissertation on "PLEASE NATIONALISE ME: OWNERSHIP VS. CONTROL OF THE ECONOMY- The Case of the Third World" bears this out. What you do is that you encourage joint ventures between foreign firms and local firms and take out your profits in untaxed commission, or through transfer pricing. This puts "Robin Hoods" in a difficult position. A number of them have adopted

a socialist way of development and your coup tactics may not work.

I do not want to bore you with what you surely know. You have used ethnic differences as a smokescreen. You have created national boundaries so that there can be no common action against you. You have used racial differences for your survival. You have divided the world into different spheres and you have supplied arms to maintain your Kingdom. In short Mr. Capital, you have used all the methods possible to facilitate exploitation and oppress people irrespective of colour, origins, and geographical regions. But as you have discovered, every move you make tightens the know around your neck. The workers have been fighting for their birthright, i.e. labour and the control of their labour. But now they do not have to fight, for as you are aware the bourgeois theory of science has disintegrated and your ideology has disintegrated.

Editorial - contd.

3. A new class is in the process of development in some socialist countries whose material basis is the growth of 'systemofacture' - that era of modern industry which privileges control over the abstract organisation of social and economic systems in contrast to the simple ownership of particular means of production. If control over labour was crucial to feudalism, and control over means of production was crucial to capitalism, then control over the means of co-ordination is crucial to post revolutionary class structures. Whereas the progressive demand in the era of capitalist private property was the expropriation of the means of production, the progressive demand in the era of actually existing socialism is democratisation of all areas of social life.

4. The question of socialist strategy could not adequately be posed in terms of 'developing the forces of production'. It is not just a matter of higher growth rates, rapid industrialisation, or shifting surplus from agriculture to finance the towns. Rather all economic policies should be seen in terms of the class relations they reproduce. Does modern industry strengthen the new technocrats? Does the sale of commodities on the world market and the import of foreign technology confirm capitalist relations of production in production? And so on. In socialist countries politics clearly dominates economics. Differing policies tend to reflect changes in the balance of class forces. The issue then in socialist development is politics not policies.

The debates on socialism can indeed be seen to be debates between two newly forming modes of production. The issues in the debates and the way we characterise them are not merely academic. We believe they have profound political importance both in socialist countries, and in countries still lodged in the capitalist world.

Poem on a Prison Wall

Dedication to a Cause...

If tens of thousands stand by to perform the duties we leave undone,
If tens of thousands pick up and raise the red flags that fall by our feet,
If after death in the funeral march, our dirge by these thousands is sung,
Then we are prepared to give up our lives wherever with death we meet.
Flowers of Revolution...

See these blossoms strewn on earth and withered lie,
Their fragrance shall abide, shall never die,
To raise its sweetness high to limits limitless,
More buds will bloom and bloom and multiply.