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THE YSL RIGHT WING AND THE "CRISIS OF WORLD STALINISM"

By Shane Mage

"The question of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the question of the relation between the proletarian state and bourgeois rule, between proletarian democracy and bourgeois democracy...Kautsky has to gloss over and to confuse the question at issue, for he formulates it in the manner of the liberals, speaks about democracy IN GENERAL, and not of bourgeois democracy."

"If we are not to mock at common sense and history, it is obvious that we cannot speak of 'pure democracy' so long as different classes exist; we can only speak of class democracy."

--V. I. Lenin, The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky

The NAC "Draft Resolution on the Crisis of World Stalinism" is, in its political essence, about as bad as can be expected. That is to say, it is a fitting theoretical expression for a political tendency which once based itself on Marxism but today wants nothing more than its own organizational liquidation into the social-democracy, and to that end is engaged in a "systematic political adaptation to social-democracy," a systematic ideological liquidation into social-democracy.

It therefore comes as no surprise that this resolution would hardly require the revision of more than a couple of phrases to be acceptable to the SP-SDF. Nor, alas, is it a surprise that the intellectual level of the resolution is marked by a combination of pompous self-righteousness and complete ignorance or neglect of vital facts determining the reality and perspectives of the East European revolution. Whatever aspect of the resolution we attempt to criticize, we are faced with an embarras de richesse.

The NAC majority proclaims that, on the Russian question above all others, it always has been, and always will be, completely correct, and everyone else completely wrong. Now I don't deny the NAC majority the right to believe that the "theory of bureaucratic collectivism," whatever it is, has been borne out by the developments of the past year. But before this can be claimed, it must be proven. That is, the "bureaucratic collectivists" must show what inherent and inevitable contradictions, different from those which mark the evolution of capitalism, on the one hand, and a degenerated workers' state, on the other, are leading to the overthrow of this supposedly "new" social system. As we all know, this has never been done while Stalinism seemed to be in good health. It should be somewhat easier, as well as more important, now that the disappearance of Stalinism is so obviously on the historical agenda; and this makes the failure of the resolution even to attempt such a demonstration all the more glaring.

It is also interesting to note that the resolution, so bold in its reaffirmation of "bureaucratic collectivism," doesn't show the slightest awareness of the actual developments which are in at least seeming contradiction to this theory. For instance, if this "new social system" represents a "historical alternative to socialism," the "bureaucratic collectivist future" which represents a "setback for an indefinite period (to) the working class, democracy, and socialism," isn't it strange that the development of socialist revolution should take place first under Stalinism, before any of the capitalist states, where the conditions facing the workers' are

so much "better," even approach a revolutionary situation? Aren't there any theoretical problems posed by the emergence of pro-working class and even revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy and its institutions? How explain the revolutionary role of the youth, despite "their privileged position in the society?" On what theoretical basis can the bureaucratic "self-reform" be related to the revolution whose flood gates it opened?

These and other questions represent a decisive test for all theories of Stalinism. A serious analysis of "The Crisis of World Stalinism" would deal with them in thorough and painstaking fashion. Unfortunately, the conditions of the present dispute in the YSL are anything but propitious for such an objective and scientific examination. I fully intend to present a thorough-going analysis of the theoretical implications of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions after the convention. Meanwhile, there remains the outstanding example of how not to deal with an important theoretical and political question, the NAC "Draft Resolution." Let us start with some of the more inane constructions with which the NAC majority proclaims its eternal rightness.

Inane Construction and Eternal Rightness

Paragraph 3 of the Resolution sets a "theoretical framework" of sorts for the East European revolutions. It states "The fundamental structure of international politics since the end of World War II has been a three-cornered struggle between the imperialism of bureaucratic-collectivist Stalinism, the imperialism of the capitalist camp led by the United States, and the forces of all the oppressed, of the international working class and the colonial peoples." Leave aside for the nonce all the theoretical errors and look at this statement as a picture of the reality of world politics since the war. "The forces of all the oppressed" oppose capitalism and Stalinism, we are told. Don't the comrades of the NAC majority know that the "oppressed" of an insignificant country known as China, together with several other "colonial peoples," have carried through revolutions which have lined up with the Stalinist camp? A minor fact, to be sure, but nevertheless not exactly in accordance with this theory.

Paragraph 15 is devoted to a condemnation of the theory of Stalinism associated with Isaac Deutscher. I have no quarrel with the Resolution's rejection of "deutscherism" (though someone sympathetic to Deutscher's views would have a right to object that his position has been crudely oversimplified, hence distorted, and that it is absolutely unjust to Deutscher as a historian and analyst to place his theories on the same plane with the ravings of a Hannah Arendt). But paragraph 16 goes on from that to smear everyone who disagrees with the "orthodox" position on Stalinism with the same "Deutscherite" brush, in the following remarkable fashion: "This theory...becomes then transmuted among all of those who hold one variety or another of illusion about Stalinism and who regard it as 'progressive' or 'a kind of socialism' into a program of reliance on the bureaucracy for the struggle against Stalinism. It urges the masses to be quiescent, lest the rulers be frightened into withdrawing their 'reforms', and in this reveals its perniciousness."

Note well that elegant phrase "all of those who hold one variety or another of illusion about Stalinism." That obviously includes me, since as everyone knows, I hold to the "illusion" that the Chinese revolution represents a progressive historical event. It obviously includes the

Socialist Workers Party, which agrees with me on the Chinese revolution and further believes that all the Stalinist states are "degenerate" or "deformed" proletarian states. Above all, it obviously includes the "American Socialist" magazine, which refers to Russia as "a kind of socialism."

It is obviously difficult for the NAC majority comrades to conceive that those who hold what they regard as "illusions" about Stalinism are in favor of the revolutionary overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy and oppose urging the masses to be "quiescent". But in the real world, as opposed to the fantasy world in which only the ISL, the YSL right wing, and the international Social-Democracy are reliable anti-Stalinist and everyone else is one variety or another of Deutscherite, this happens to be a fact, and everyone who has read the statements on the Hungarian and Polish revolutions in the "Militant" or even the "American Socialist" knows it to be a fact!

The mental processes behind the NAC majority delusion were explained very openly by comrade Oppenheimer in the last issue of YSR (page 22): "the Cannonites objectively urge the subordination of working class interests to those of the degenerated workers state, so called, according to my understanding of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism, to which I hold." The minds of the NAC majority have obviously worked in the same way: according to the "theory of bureaucratic collectivism," the "Cannonites" (remember that these comrades regard the YSL left wing as "Cannonites") "objectively urge the subordination of working class interests." So why not come right out and say so? Why bother to look through the "Militant" to find out what they actually propose, "objectively" as well as "subjectively?" Our theory tells us that they "urge the subordination of working class interests," and that's quite enough. Anyone who thinks that theories have to be checked by constant reference to reality is obviously a vulgar empiricist, sectarian, and schematic to boot!

In paragraph 44, there is another reference to the world political situation of the past decade which is also indicative of the relation (or lack of sense) between the NAC majority's theories and reality: "all indications show that the Russians were aiming at world domination primarily through spreading Stalinist influence on the basis of indigenous movements, rather than by military aggression." The notion that the Russians were "aiming at world domination" at all is simply laughable, in view of their obvious economic inability to achieve or maintain that domination (as I showed in the discussions at the time of the last convention). The notion that the Russians sought world domination "through spreading Stalinist influence on the basis of indigenous movements" would not be out of place in the disordered brain of a J. Edgar Hoover, but it has no place in the resolution of a socialist organization. Does the NAC majority deny that Russian policy has consistently sold out powerful Stalinist-led movements in the interests of a deal with Western imperialism, all throughout the history of the Stalinist bureaucracy? Is there anyone in the YSL who has not learned the lessons of Spain, Greece, France, Italy, Iran, Guatemala, and many other countries? Does anyone in the YSL claim that where there has been "spreading Stalinist influence on the basis of indigenous movements" as in China, this has been due in any significant measure to Russian policy, or has resulted in Russian domination of these areas? Will anyone be bold enough to explain how Russia could aim at "world domination" when it is unable even to dominate China?

On the "Bankruptcy" of American Foreign Policy

Formulations like those discussed above give a clear picture of the intellectual and political level of the NAC "Draft Resolution", but they are not the main things wrong with it. Also in the category of secondary defects is the repetition ad nauseam of the shibboleth about American foreign policy being "bankrupt." This phrase is probably useful in talking to liberals who don't understand the first thing about capitalism and socialism. But it is radically false in a resolution which must aim at scientific precision. American foreign policy is reactionary, militarist, imperialist. It is not bankrupt -- i.e., it has huge resources and excellent chances to carry out its reactionary aims.

The trouble with American foreign policy, for a Marxist tendency, is not that it is "bankrupt", but that it is the foreign policy of the greatest capitalist and imperialist power on earth. We would have a lot less to worry about if U.S. foreign policy was, in fact, "bankrupt", instead of being what it is: the most powerful and deadly enemy of socialism in the world. The deadly danger in using the term "bankrupt" in reference to U.S. foreign policy is not that it will be taken in its literal sense, as indicating that U.S. capitalism, and therefore its foreign policy, is on the verge of complete collapse, but that it will reinforce liberal and social-democratic illusions in the minds of our contacts and newer members to the effect that it is possible for U.S. foreign policy, short of a socialist revolution, to be something other than imperialist and reactionary.

I do not charge that the NAC majority holds these illusions yet. But it is definitely and visibly adapting itself politically to these social-democratic ideas. That this is the political essence of the phrase "bankruptcy", and not just a matter of a typical sloppy formulation, is proven by the unanimous rejection by the NAC of an amendment offered by comrade Tim which stated the elementary Marxist truth that "The U.S. cannot take any truly non-imperialist, progressive, action...until such time as the working class comes to power in this country."

This process of systematic political adaptation to social-democracy is the root of all the fundamental errors in the resolution. It lies behind the abandonment of the Marxist class analysis of "democracy," the abandonment of the revolutionary socialist view of the workers councils in the socialist revolution, the abandonment of the Marxist position on the need for a revolutionary vanguard party in the transition to socialism, and in general a completely lopsided, distorted picture of the revolutions in Poland and Hungary.

The Right Wing and "Democracy"

It is no accident that the key phrase in the analysis of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions is "democracy" -- not "bourgeois democracy", not "workers democracy", not even "peasant democracy", but plain, unqualified "democracy", "democracy" in general. There may be some younger members of the YSL who see nothing wrong with this procedure. I advise all such comrades to study very carefully the writings of Lenin on this subject, notably "State and Revolution" and "Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky." The key thought, absolutely basic to the Marxist theory of the state, is that any form of government in a class society, including a democracy, essentially embodies the domination ("dictatorship") of one class over the

others. This is especially true of workers democracy because the proletariat, inherently a propertyless class, cannot rule except directly and politically, i.e., through its own class organizations of the "soviet" type. Any form of "pure" "classless" democracy "in general" can only express the domination of the economically strongest class, i.e., is necessarily bourgeois democracy.

These basic considerations are well known to the members of the NAC, and presumably these comrades accept them, at least formally. What the resolution does is simply to declare them inapplicable to the revolution under Stalinism, in the following way (par. 26):

"What must be remembered is that under Stalinism, the fight for democracy has a different social meaning than it does under capitalism, so long as it is limited to general democratic aims and demands no other change. Under capitalism, such a struggle represents a struggle for capitalist democracy. Under Stalinism, where the means of production are statified, the fight for democracy which calls for no other changes, and hence seeks the democratization of statified property, becomes the revolution for democratic socialism, even if it is not so consciously expressed."

What we have here is a schematic formula, rigidified into a fetish, used as a substitute for a concrete historical analysis. The leaders of the YSL have for a long time relied on the formula that Stalinism is not socialist because its nationalized property is not accompanied by political democracy. The obvious corollary to this is that nationalized property plus political democracy is socialism. And this is the theoretical essence of the quoted paragraph.

This is a good example of the dangers inherent in an agitational oversimplification. It's a lot easier and more effective for us to talk about "democracy" as a prerequisite for socialism than to use that nasty term "dictatorship of the proletariat." In the case of the YSL right wing, this has gone past a mere tactical adaptation of language and has become an adaptation of thought. The struggle for socialism under Stalinism ceases to be a struggle for workers power, and becomes a struggle for "general democratic aims."

The false, abstract, undialectical character of the methodology of the NAC majority is exemplified by the proposition that the struggle against Stalinism is the struggle for socialism "so long as it is limited to general democratic aims and demands no other change." But of course the reality of the revolution in Eastern Europe is not that of pure democracy and "no other change." A huge number of economic and social changes which are not necessarily those flowing from "general democratic aims" are the inseparable accompaniment to the popular revolution against Stalinism: to cite only the one change referred to by the resolution, the peasants have spontaneously eliminated collectivized agriculture, and restored private property on the land. It is exactly these changes that determine the actual character of the revolution against Stalinism, not an abstract formula about the relation of "democracy" to "socialism".

The formula nationalized property in industry plus political democracy equals socialism is not even true on an abstract level, no matter how useful agitationally. If it was true, Austria and Burma, both of whose industry

is largely nationalized, and both of whom have relatively democratic political structures, would be socialist states. The essential prerequisite for development toward socialism is the raising of the working class to the position of a ruling class, or, in precise scientific terms, the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

Would the struggle for "general democratic aims" under Stalinism be sufficient to raise the working class to the level of a ruling class? The NAC resolution answers in the affirmative, on the basis of its formula. This position has interesting theoretical consequences, which we will discuss later. A real answer, however, must rest on a concrete analysis of the Polish and Hungarian revolutions.

"Democracy" and Capitalist Restoration

The key question is this: theoretically, was it possible for the Polish and Hungarian revolutions to result in the restoration of capitalism? The NAC draft resolution precludes this, since it states that "democracy" is sufficient to define "the revolution for democratic socialism." This view, in my opinion, is possible only on the basis of a singular ignorance of the actual social and economic forces determining the evolution of Poland and Hungary, and the world context in which these revolutions took place.

What would have been the development in Poland or Hungary if the revolution had in fact achieved the establishment of formal democracy, of the western type, with "no other change?" We here must abstract from the actual level of socialist consciousness attained by the Polish and Hungarian workers, since this is not a determining factor in the argument of the NAC resolution. It should, however, be made clear that I believe this level of socialist consciousness was the decisive factor in the whole development, the key to the future of these countries.

The establishment of formal democracy, if it means anything at all, means free elections to a sovereign parliament. Free elections, in turn would mean the establishment of a government reflecting the numerically largest section of the population. In Poland and Hungary this majority is not the working class. It is the petty-bourgeoisie of town and country, the peasants, small shopkeepers, artisans, and the old middle classes.

Could free elections in Poland or Hungary result in fact in a government representing this petty-bourgeois majority? A majority cannot express its rule unless it is organized. Could this majority have been organized?

Here we come to one of the most shocking features of the NAC draft resolution. The authors of the draft have made the most stupid omission possible in a resolution on Poland and Hungary: there is no mention whatever of the Catholic Church, either as a religious institution or as a social force!

Yet, in both Poland and Hungary the Church is the one institution to emerge full blown from the Stalinist regime, with a highly organized and stable apparatus, a long tradition of continuity, and a high degree of popular prestige. The actual power of the Catholic Church is shown by the enormous extent to which religious education was reintroduced into the schools in Poland and Hungary (particularly in Poland, there have been frequent reports of the persecution of atheist and Jewish children by Catholic

majorities). The power of the Church was shown most dramatically by Cardinal Wysinski's intervention on behalf of Gomulka at the time of the recent Polish elections -- an action which, according to all reports, played a major part in saving the Gomulka regime from what seemed likely to be a drastic setback. Can there be any doubt that in really free elections the candidates endorsed by the Church would have a huge advantage among the Catholic majority?

What role does the Church desire to play in these revolutions? The Draft Resolution states that in Poland and Hungary "forces which advocate capitalist restoration...were extremely small and carried no weight." It is true that neither in Poland nor in Hungary did the Church present an openly capitalist program. But it is not necessary for it to do so. The Catholic Church, by its very nature as an international body completely controlled from the Vatican, plays a certain role in world politics -- the role of an important ally of U.S. imperialism and of capitalist reaction in all countries. If it felt free to do so, what reason is there to think that the Church headed by Mindszenty would act differently than does the Church in Italy, Spain, or Austria? And if free elections should return a parliament with a Catholic majority, reflecting the Catholic majority in the countryside, wouldn't the Church feel free?

There seems to me to be a high degree of probability that really free elections in both Poland and Hungary would return a petty-bourgeois, clerical majority. Free elections were never held in Poland after the war, but if they had been held, few except the Stalinist have denied that they would have been won by the Peasant Party of Mikolajczyk. Free elections were held in Hungary, and they resulted in a substantial majority for the Smallholders party, led by the clerical reactionaries Ferenc Nagy and Msgr. (!) Bela Varga.

Would a government of Mindszenty-Ferenc Nagy or Mikolajczyk-Wyszinski have been able to restore capitalism*? It is here irrelevant to argue that no such governments could, in fact, have been formed -- because they obviously could have been if the revolutions had remained within the bounds of formal parliamentary democracy with full democratic rights for all parties and individuals, including clerics and emigres. The question at issue is precisely the nature and role of such formal parliamentary democracy in East Europe -- remember that the draft resolution considers this "democracy" equivalent to socialism.

I believe that a petty-bourgeois government in either Poland or Hungary, if allowed to stabilize itself and get a firm grip on the country, would be able to bring about a return to capitalism, and in very short order. The first step would be the absolutely necessary one, for any non-Stalinist government, of restoring capitalist relationships in agriculture and small production and retail trade. The NEP in Russia continually tended to develop restorationist tendencies, epitomized in the rise of the kulaks and Nepmen. Bukharin's policy of concessions to these capitalist elements would

* The term "capitalism" is used to refer to a petty-bourgeois type of state capitalism, based (to start with) on small property on the land and on production and trade, as distinguished from Stalinist or socialist type economies, in which the major emphasis is placed on the growth of the state sector, i.e., of industrial production.

in fact have brought about this sort of capitalist restoration despite the subjective desire of the Bolshevik right wing to prevent it. NEP in a backward and exhausted country is a dangerous business at best -- if placed in the hands of the political representatives of the kulaks and Nepmen (and the peasant and petty-bourgeois parties could be nothing else) it would certainly lead straight to capitalism.

Another decisive aspect of the return to capitalism under petty-bourgeois democratic leadership would be the ties of Poland and Hungary with the capitalist world market, most important, of course, with the gigantic economic strength of U.S. imperialism. It is no secret that the main positive political program of U.S. imperialism toward East Europe is based on massive economic aid, in the form of "loans" and outright gifts. This "aid" would have a dual effect: it would be a political ace of trumps in the hands of the bourgeois politicians who alone would have access to the American largess, and it would very rapidly serve to reorient the economies of Poland and Hungary back to their traditional dependence on Western capitalism. Lenin once remarked that he was far less afraid of the White Guard armies than of the cheap Western commodities they brought in their train. American commodities entering Eastern Europe under petty-bourgeois governments would not merely be cheap -- they would be free!

And what would become of the nationalized industries? Their fate would serve the interests of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie and the needs for trade with the Western capitalists. Hungary and Poland can be capitalist states without denationalizing a single large industrial plant; all that is necessary is to convert the industry, democratically of course, into an appendage of the peasant economy and the world economy.

What does this mean? An orientation entirely to consumer goods production, for the benefit of the peasants. A cessation of new investment and even repairs, since this would divert resources away from the petty-bourgeois sector. Abandonment of industries that could not compete on the world market -- why should a Polish shopkeeper pay twice as much for a Zeran car as for a superior Volkswagen? Such investment and modernization as takes place to be financed by private Western capital, at no cost to the national economy.

And the consequences of this for the workers? Wages kept low, to keep down the cost of production. Workers councils would naturally not be allowed to interfere with the decisions of the democratic majority on questions concerning the management of the economy. The present grossly overexpanded work force would be sharply reduced as an obvious rationalization measure. And of course, the workers representatives would not hold power in the government and parliament; after all, in a democracy, doesn't the majority rule?

We should here re-emphasize that the above is not a picture of what I believe to have been the real perspective before Hungary and Poland, the real class nature of these revolutions. It is a picture of a real possibility of the evolution of these countries, if the workers had restricted themselves to "general democratic aims." The essential thing that it shows is that it is completely false to argue that the establishment of parliamentary democracy is sufficient to convert a Stalinist state into a Socialist one. Under Stalinism as under capitalism, there is no such thing as democracy in general; there is proletarian democracy, and there is bourgeois

democracy. Nothing else. The "classless" parliamentary forms of democracy, in a country with a peasant and petty-bourgeois majority, represent bourgeois democracy.

The Socialist Alternative

If a formal and parliamentary democracy was likely to lead to a petty-bourgeois government and the restoration of capitalism in Poland and Hungary, what should have been the socialist alternative to these "general democratic aims?" The answer was given by the Russian Revolution, which also took place in a backward country in which free parliamentary elections would have necessarily resulted in a restoration of capitalism. That answer is the establishment of the state power of the working class.

In Hungary this solution was indicated perfectly by the course of the revolution itself, in which the decisive organs of revolutionary struggle were the workers councils. These councils were created in the course of the struggle by the spontaneous action of the workers themselves, and quickly proved themselves to be the political leadership of the entire nation.

The workers council or soviet represents the indicated form for the establishment of workers power in Hungary and, with slight difference of form, in every other country. In a country like Hungary, the creation of councils of working peasants, peasant soviets, would provide a means whereby the peasant majority could be represented in the government while preserving the state power of the proletariat through its class institutions. In scientific terminology, the state emerging from the revolution would be a workers state; the government would be a workers and farmers government.

Of course the mere establishment of a republic of workers councils in Poland or Hungary does not guarantee these countries against capitalist restoration. The proletarian regimes in East Europe would immediately be faced by the same sort of problems which beset the first soviet republic under NEP, and, if the revolution should fail to extend itself to the advanced countries of Western Europe, these states too would degenerate and eventually collapse. What the workers republic would guarantee is the opportunity of the working class at every point to impose its own conscious socialist direction on the nation.

It may be that some comrades who have never read Lenin or forgotten what they once learned will claim that this is "undemocratic", because a soviet type of state would mean the rule of a minority, the working class, over the majority of the population, mainly peasants. In reply to this objection, we point out the following basic facts:

1.) The peasantry, even where it is in the majority, is incapable of ruling in its own name. As a stratum of small commodity producers, i.e., a petty-bourgeois class, it tends to follow behind its natural leaders, the petty-bourgeois and "middle class" elements in the cities. In East Europe, this has been and is concretely expressed in the allegiance of the peasantry to the Catholic hierarchy. A government "representing" the East European peasantry would be dominated by clerical and pro-capitalist forces, which not only are a much smaller minority than the proletariat, but are of course a reactionary, inherently anti-democratic minority as well.

2.) The state of a soviet type, in terms of the actual rights and

powers enjoyed by the masses of the people, including the poor peasants, is infinitely more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic, freely-elected parliament and all.

3.) In the actual revolution, the working class was the undisputed leader of the entire nation, and was the sole social force capable of an all-out struggle to over-throw the Stalinist bureaucracy. This fact gives it the highest democratic right to establish its own state. Historical experience shows that the working class is able to win support from large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and peasantry only when it shows them that it is capable of acting to solve the problems of the entire society in a revolutionary fashion on its own, trusting only to its own class forces.

The question naturally arises: if the Russian counter-revolutionary intervention had not taken place, would the Hungarian revolution have, in fact, resulted in a republic of workers councils? Of course, we cannot answer this question definitively. But certain clear facts about the objective and subjective aspects of the Hungarian revolution indicate that an affirmative answer was highly probable.

The first and decisive thing about the Hungarian revolution is that it was a workers revolution, and the leading role of the workers was institutionally formulated by the establishment of workers councils. Except for the Russian army, there was in Hungary not the shadow of a social force capable of preventing the assumption of state power by the workers councils. Thus the objective conditions for the formation of a soviet republic, in the event of revolutionary victory of course, were entirely favorable.

The actual level of consciousness of the Hungarian workers, however, was not at the level indicated by the objective possibilities of the revolution. In this the Hungarian workers were like the Russian proletariat after the February revolution. The general demand was not for all power to the workers councils, but for "free elections" to a sovereign parliament.

It would, however, be a disastrous mistake to take the level of consciousness corresponding to the struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy as the permanent and ultimate political program of the Hungarian proletariat. The Hungarian workers wanted "free elections," but they also wanted to preserve their own councils and extend their powers. They wanted to move forward to socialism, not backward to capitalism.

If the revolution had been successful, the workers councils would have emerged with the decisive aspects of state power, de facto, in their hands. They would not be likely to surrender this power to the petty-bourgeois and clerical government resulting from "free elections". A state of dual power between parliament and soviets would tend to emerge. In this the Hungarian workers would, in their own way, be recapitulating the experience of the Russian working class. In Russia, as we all should know, the proletarian revolution was followed by free elections to a constituent assembly, the most democratic type of bourgeois parliament. Petty-bourgeois parties, of a far more "leftist" type than would be found in the Hungary of Mindszenty, dominated this constituent assembly. In Russia, it took only a day to make clear to the workers councils that they could not tolerate the existence of a bourgeois government by their side. The

Russian workers acted in the right way; under the leadership of the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky they dispersed the parliament and made it clear to the entire world that the soviets were the only power in Russia. The Hungarian workers would eventually be faced with the same problem, and eventually would have to act in the same way, or see the conquests of their revolution seized from them by the restorationist elements.

The Need for a Revolutionary Party

The Russian workers were able to act as they did only because of the presence of a revolutionary Marxist party, capable of anticipating events, drawing the lessons of the proletarian struggles, and taking resolute revolutionary action. In Hungary too, the establishment of the power of the workers councils would require such a party. The absence of a bolshevik party was one of the main causes for the strength of bourgeois-democratic and even pro-western illusions among the workers. These illusions were the inevitable product of the situation of the Hungarian working class, of its experiences under the Stalinist dictatorship. They could be overcome only in the course of open political struggle after the destruction of the Stalinist regime. To do this, to raise its consciousness to a higher level, the Hungarian workingclass would have had to absorb the experience of a century of revolutionary socialist struggles, and most of all the experience of the last half-century of Marxist political thought, the body of theory developed best of all by Lenin and Trotsky.

For the Hungarian working class to learn these lessons would have been, at the same time, for it to construct a revolutionary Marxist party capable of leading the proletariat to the consolidation of its own power. Failure to reach this new level of class consciousness, failure to create a bolshevik party, would have meant that the working class would, sooner or later, let the state power slip out of its fingers and into the hands of the "democratic" majority representing the petty-bourgeoisie and the Church.

What is the position of the NAC Draft Resolution on these quintessential points: the establishment of workers power and the necessity for a revolutionary party? The authors of the NAC draft have completely abandoned these central points of Marxist theory and politics, under the cover of some very sleazy formulations.

This is all the resolution has to say about the type of socialist party needed by the Hungarian workers: "The need for a working class political party to best express the socialist aspirations of the masses, to safeguard the revolution, and to help lead the nation to democratic socialism would arise after the victory of the anti-Stalinist revolution." Note well what kind of party the NAC majority expects to do these things -- not a "revolutionary" party, not a "Marxist" party, not, God forbid, a "bolshevik" or "Leninist" party, but "a working class political party". And this party would not lead the nation to socialism by itself -- it would merely "help" in this process, along with, presumably, some other party which is not "a working class party" (like, say, the Smallholders party or the Christian Peoples Party?)

But it is not merely any old "workingclass party" that the authors of the NAC draft expect "to best express the socialist aspirations of the masses." They have a specific candidate for this role: "there is a good possibility that the revived Social-Democratic Party could have carried out

those tasks." Some naive comrade might ask, "but why the Social-Democratic Party, and not some other?" The resolution of course cites no evidence whatever that the Hungarian Social-Democracy was capable of fulfilling the role assigned to it, and it is perfectly plain that this is because the comrades of the NAC majority had no such evidence in their possession. If this hypothetical comrade, in addition to being naive, also knew something about the Hungarian Social-Democracy he might wonder about certain facts which indicated the opposite conclusion as to the ability of this party to do what the NAC majority expects of it.

He might, for instance, recall that practically the first legal act of the revived Social-Democratic party was to participate in an international meeting of the Second International; not itself a criminal act, but the expression of solidarity with criminals like Mollet. He might recall Kethly's appeal for U.N. intervention in Hungary; perhaps only a reflection of the pro-western illusions in the minds of the Hungarian workers, but still not exactly what is to be expected of a socialist leadership. He might have read the statement by the Hungarian left-Social Democrat, Francois Fojto, that "the old non-communist parties were impotent. The socialist leaders like Anna Kethly were worn out." (La Tragedie Hongroise, p. 309).

What is naive about these considerations is the assumption that the facts concerning Hungarian Social-Democracy had any influence whatever on the NAC majority. Out of all the working class parties in Hungary they chose the Social-Democrats for one and only one reason -- the YSL right wing has a general orientation toward the Social-Democracy in all countries, an orientation of cap...pardon me, an orientation of systematic political adaptation toward the international social-democracy. This shows itself in little things as well as big, in its identification with the Hungarian Social-Democrats as in its substitution of bourgeois democracy for workers power.

To cross all the T's and dot all the I's, the NAC majority made its rejection of the need for a revolutionary Marxist party crystal clear by unanimously voting down an amendment in which Tim called for the formation of a "revolutionary party...as the conscious arm of the revolutionary workers."

The Right Wing and Workers Power

As I have shown above, the theoretical orientation of the NAC majority is toward bourgeois democracy, not workers power. This is again made painfully evident by the unanimous (as always) rejection of a number of amendments by Tim calling for the establishment of workers power in the East European revolutions. For instance, the NAC majority unanimously rejected the following statement: "We advance the slogan of 'All Power to the Workers Councils' as the key to the victory of the anti-Stalinist working class revolution." (Incidentally, Tim's terminology here is not the best possible -- I would say that 'All Power to the Workers Councils' is not a "slogan" but a main strategic orientation. However, this sort of objection obviously has nothing in common with the approach of the NAC majority.)

The fact that the NAC majority is for "general democratic aims" (and refuses to call for "All Power to Workers Councils") is sufficient to expose the real content of the following "endorsement" of the Councils: "The

(Workers Councils) could be the organs of future working class leadership in the democratic rule of the country. The working class made it abundantly evident that it desired to maintain these, its class organs, after the revolution, both as instruments of workers control in the factories and as organs of political leadership in the country as a whole. As against those who derogate the workers councils, or who call for their abolition, or restrict or limit them, we stand as their supporters."

This passage is itself sufficient evidence for the existence and historical roots of the "Independent Socialist Tendency." Its political essence is identical to the position in the German Revolution of the "Independent Socialist" party of Kautsky and Hilferding. This centrist tendency was "for" the soviets. It "opposed" those who wanted to abolish or limit them. Thus Kautsky wrote, "The Soviet organization has already behind it a great and glorious history, and it has a still more bright future before it.... the Soviet organization is one of the most important phenomena of our time. It promises to acquire decisive importance in the great decisive battles between capital and labor toward which we are marching" (quoted in Lenin, op. cit., page 39).

The only trouble was that the Independent Socialists of 1919, like those of 1957, were not willing to call for "All Power to the Workers Councils." They were undyingly opposed to "restricting" or "limiting" them, of course; they merely wished to combine the soviets with the "general democratic aims" of a freely-elected parliamentary government!

Under such conditions the soviets could only be, as Lenin pointed out, instruments for the subjugation of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. A condition in which soviets exist side by side with a parliamentary "democratic" government is a situation of dual power. It is the height of political imbecility to expect dual power to exist on a semi-permanent basis in any country whatsoever. In Russia the soviets were compelled to destroy the Constituent Assembly. In Germany, the Constituent Assembly of Weimar (democratically elected, of course) succeeded in destroying the soviets. In Hungary the situation would differ only slightly. Although the overtly capitalist forces were weak, a petty-bourgeois clerical government emerging from free elections could quickly make itself a strong center for restorationist elements. The clash between such a government and the Workers Councils would come quickly and inevitably. If the revolution had been successful to the extent of eliminating the Stalinist power, the workers would have been faced with the necessity for eliminating the bourgeois government before it became strong enough to eliminate the Workers Councils.

In Conclusion

Unfortunately, the NAC draft resolution can do no harm -- I say unfortunately because the Stalinist victory made the problem of what to do in the event of revolutionary victory a moot one. But the orientation and advice expressed in this resolution can do nothing but harm in any future, more successful revolutions in East Europe. To urge the workers to accept "general democratic aims" and not to establish their own state power is to prepare fatally the victory of bourgeois and clerical reaction. The workers revolution can never be successful short of the conquest of state power by the workers organized as a class in their own class institutions which become state institutions. The NAC draft resolution "supports" the Hungarian soviets, but urges them to support democracy in general, i. e., bourgeois

democracy, and opposes the perspective of "All Power to the Workers Councils." As Lenin said, "This is where Kautsky's complete rupture with Marxism and with socialism becomes obvious. Practically, it is desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie which is prepared to concede to everything except the transformations of the organizations of the class which it oppresses into state organizations." (op. cit., page 41)

Thus we have laid bare the abandonment of Marxism involved in the position on the decisive questions of the Hungarian revolution taken by the NAC Draft Resolution. In theory, the NAC majority has given up the class analysis of democracy; it is for democracy in general, not workers democracy. The NAC majority then goes on to demonstrate the validity of the Leninist view that "democracy in general" can be nothing but a mask for bourgeois democracy. It does this by supporting the "general democratic aim" of free parliamentary elections including all parties, and by opposing any proposal for "All Power to the Workers Councils," in the actual situation of Hungary and East Europe this could only have meant the overwhelming probability of the victory of the peasant and Catholic restorationist forces. And of course the NAC majority repudiates the need for a revolutionary Marxist party to lead the Hungarian workers to socialist victory -- they consider revolutionary working class political organization as unnecessary in Hungary where a socialist revolution is underway, as in the United States of today, where only propaganda groups are possible, or, we may presume, in the United States of the future where a socialist revolution will be on the agenda.

What is involved here is part and parcel of a general political development on the part of the "Independent Socialist Tendency" -- part of a "systematic adaptation to social democracy" which is expressed in virtually every position taken by the present leadership of the YSL. In the case of the Draft Resolution these comrades may have gone further along this path than they themselves have realized (it is a common characteristic of centrists that they are incapable of thinking their thoughts through to the end, and that they display a notable lack of gratitude when Marxists perform this service for them.) I hope that this is the case as far as the members of the YSL at least are concerned. If so, it may be possible to patch up some of the worst parts of this resolution by suitable amendments. In any case, the NAC Draft Resolution stands as a fitting political, intellectual, and theoretical expression of the tendency which has produced it.

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