

TOWARD COMMUNIST CONSCIOUSNESS

from internationalist to global strategy

Survivors from the shambles of what was once the New Left have gathered here again today, hoping to revive the "unity" of the anti-war days, when the line between political virtue and villainy was clearly drawn - or at least seemed that way. To define oneself negatively according to what one opposes, always simplifies matters - so much so that it even becomes possible (or rather, convenient to forget the truth of the old adage: "The enemy of my enemy is not necessarily my friend."

Yet the sense of urgency, manifest at this conference, for a thoroughgoing global reassessment, and the genuine anguish felt by so many who can't find their way through the thicket of sordid compromises and embarrassing contradictions that are euphemised under the heading "Peoples' Diplomacy", are quite valid, and not to be scorned and treated lightly. Nonetheless, it is refreshing to see the winds of history finally knock to earth so many (like Irwin Silber, for example) who for years have been walking the tightrope of "critical support" for this or that "Peoples' Republic." Events are forcing everyone to think. A politics based on emotional allegiance ("good guys and bad guys") has become untenable.

Since the present political-economic crisis became apparent in the late 'sixties, the working class and the capitalist class have found themselves

opposed once again, this time on an international scale. Hence the necessity for a socialist world strategy becomes all the more pressing, not only as an answer to the bourgeoisie's "Trilateral" strategy for a "New World Economic Order" but also as a way beyond it.

To oppose the capitalist crisis with a patchwork of reforms or with a specious alliance of "sovereign" nation-States - an alliance which in no way challenges the legitimacy of bourgeois and/or bureaucratic rule within them - will only help the ruling classes to weaken us beyond the point where we can effectively strike back. Likewise, to oppose it with a revolutionary upsurge without adequate preparation on a world scale, means certain defeat and annihilation.

The issues we face range far beyond a mere analysis of the interplay of power within the world market, although such an analysis and subsequent debate are essential. The most important single issue is actually the accelerating disintegration of the capitalist mode of production - worldwide!

The world financial structure and global industrial interdependence have interlocked the destinies of every nation in an unprecedented way. Nowadays it is an open question whether the collapse of the present U.S. dominated economic system would in fact benefit any one country or group of countries. China's relationship with fascist regimes (Chile, Iran, the Philippines), and the U.S.S.R.'s neo-colonialist tendencies in relation to the COMECON countries and others, are the consequence of this interdependency and competition. To attempt to describe either China or the U.S.S.R. as "socialist" or even as "workers' states" is fallacious, despite their undeniable achievements. The basic capitalist relations of production (wage labor and the commodity) have not been superseded within either. Both are ruled by gigantic bureaucracies which dominate the workers in their own interests and both are being integrated ever more deeply and inexorably into the world market.

The threat of large-scale limited war, or even of World War III is impending against the workers of the planet. The concentration and

centralization of capital generated by the huge devaluation of fixed assets now in progress is sweeping aside obsolete means of production and "surplus" workers alike. In this turmoil we see again the familiar signs of depression - increased unemployment, decreased real incomes, growing repression - in short, global cannibalization of the working class. The immiseration and militarization of the great mass of the population are always necessary preconditions for the generalized acceptance of war. War is justified in economic terms as a "way out" of depression, in political terms, as a means to national unity, and in psychological terms as an outlet for the pent-up rage and frustration of the dispossessed classes. Twice during this century, war has been the "final solution" to the cyclical crisis - a tool that permits the capitalists to redivide the profit pie by plundering each others' countries, to loot the working class through underpaid and unpaid labor, and finally to resolve the unemployment and devaluation crises by wholesale slaughter of workers and literal destruction of fixed capital.

In our opinion, the alternative "war or revolution" will become more and more visible on a world scale as the crisis deepens. Yet to forget that reform is the third point of this dialectic would be perilous. Reform (e.g., the "New World Economic order") and war are both ways of rehabilitating capitalist rule: where one fails, the other succeeds. This is the old game of "hard cop, soft cop" with a vengeance, which our program and strategy must defeat at all costs.

from guilt to responsibility

Of course, it would be impossible to explain the discrepancies, apologetics and turnabouts of the Left in relation to all this, solely by reference to the objective information at hand. Indeed, delusion formation and neurotic attachments of the most obvious kind have been at work here, blocking theoretical development at precisely those points of defensiveness where the individual militant feels his political identity most threatened.

Yet at the same time, it must be said that to paint a one-sidedly negative picture of the "typical Leftist *character structure*" - whatever that is - would be just as misconceived as to cater to the self-serving mythologies upheld by (for example) some of the organizers of this conference.

Simple observation confirms the fact that political activists, especially of the Left, are exceptional in the degree to which they have cultivated certain universally admirable human qualities - conscientious reflection in the effort to achieve emotional integrity, an active eagerness to stay informed of world events, a readiness to hold oneself accountable to close associates and the larger community, and a heightened sensitivity in matters of public concern. Considering the brutalization, pervasive cynicism and overwhelming isolation engendered by late capitalism, we would hesitate to scorn - indeed, we would seek out - any human being who showed themselves capable of these qualities.

The problem lies in the contradiction between these qualities (which may be seen as a foreshadowing of the true "social individual" of global communist society) and the neurotic-regressive tendencies that condition the Leftist to reproduce alienation regardless of his/ her intentions.

The emotional conflict between guilt and responsibility is one of the most instructive examples of this psychic tension.

The familiar Maoist slogan, "Smash Self - Serve the People" which, in varying degrees of subtlety or attenuation, is the characteristic leftist response to the antagonism between individual and collective interests, is an expression of what Marx called "crude communism". In those specific historical conditions where real scarcity and privation prevails, this sacrificial attitude bears some relation to reality - though it is hardly free of distortions. However, the transplanting of these same attitudes to the militant milieu in industrially developed countries takes on the aspect of a ludicrous anachronism - almost a pathology. Even in the most progressive of the developing countries, this tendency takes its toll - for instance, in the Tanzanian slogan, "Wealth should be divided, not produced", whose similarity to the ideology of E.F. Schumacher needs no

elaboration.

The point is that guilt - involving as it does the repression of creative impulse and the concealment of real motivation under a shell of altruism and self-deception - is, ironically, just as irresponsible in the long run as a willful "selfishness" of the narrow type.

from service to solidarity

"Serving the people" has always been an ideological substitute for real communist solidarity. It presupposes several dubious premises: first, that a separation exists between individual and collective interests (other than that which our lifelong experience of capitalist alienation has seemed to put there); second, that a sacrifice is demanded from the one who "serves"; and third, that the "server's" reward, whether in money or status, is proportionate to the sacrifice offered. Class solidarity offers us a far more viable perspective. It implies self-responsibility, knowledge of the tasks to be undertaken, and an organized praxis that leaves room for individual creativity and spontaneity.

It is in this light that we make the following strategic and programmatic suggestions, not as a final statement but as a first step in a class wide, worldwide dialogue. In addition, we should emphasize that we are not aiming at a Trotskyesque "Transitional Program" which attempts to sucker workers into this or that organization (or "front") on the basis of utopian and impossible demands. The kind of program and strategy we are talking about is precisely transitional in that it aims to accomplish real, concrete steps toward worldwide communist revolution. This means accomplishing two main tasks simultaneously: first, defending the social-reproductive capacity of the human species against the present capitalist onslaught, and second, bringing a united world working class into the strategic position for as rapid and bloodless a seizure of power as possible. To the charge of "reformism" that will inevitably be brought by some comrades we can only reply that we want neither to prop up the tottering capitalist tree, nor to have it crash down on our heads, but

rather to apply the blows of our axe in such a way that it falls with the minimum of damage to working-class life and future property.

A. IMMEDIATE ORGANIZATIONAL PROPOSALS

- 1.** Investigation of global capitalist strategy for the crisis and creation of forums, conferences, and publications on this question.
- 2.** Creation and/or coordination of a worldwide network of revolutionary organizations in the direction of a new communist International.

This network would develop and propagate its global strategy through active intervention and participation in the existing class struggle. All of the programmatic suggestions underlined below depend on the organization of national and multinational strikes, boycotts, etc., and in general on the strategic deployment of already-developed working-class tactics. For example, a moratorium on city public debt could be enforced by the tactic of "self-reduction" (refusal to pay increased prices for city services) successfully used in recent months by Italian workers.

This process would coincide with:

- 3.** Creation of *ad hoc* committees, task forces, research commissions and pressure groups in order to carry out the above.
- 4.** The attempt to formulate, as an organized class, the fully-developed communist program for global reconstruction.

B. IMMEDIATE PROGRAMMATIC SUGGESTIONS - NATIONAL

- 1.** National debt moratorium for all personal and public (non-corporate) debt.
- 2.** Creation of a workers' mutual benefit fund to protect strikers, finance the campaign for communist alternatives, etc.

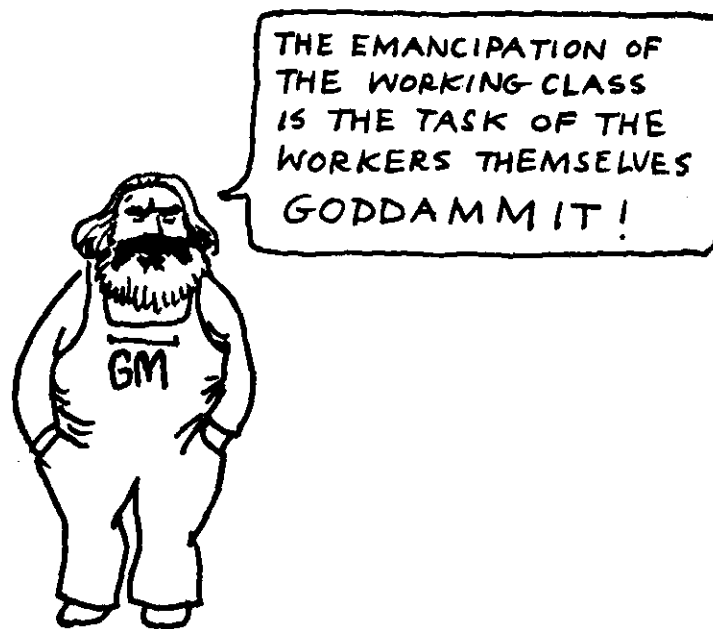
- 3.** National campaign for urban redevelopment, to halt and reverse the cannibalization of the cities and of city employees.
- 4.** National campaign for the development of new ecologically-sound energy sources, and specifically of solar and fusion power.
- 5.** National campaign for arms limitation and specifically against U.S. and NATO military intervention.
- 6.** National campaign for increased use of automation, combined with a shorter work week at the original pay.
- 7.** National campaign for a progressive tax system, including increased corporate taxation.
- 8.** National campaign for improved education and free medical care.

C. IMMEDIATE PROGRAMMATIC SUGGESTIONS - INTERNATIONAL

- 1.** International debt moratorium for all underdeveloped countries, conditional on arms limitation and expansion of real industrial infrastructure.
- 2.** Internationalization (under U.N. auspices) of all bankrupt sectors of a given country necessary for global social reproduction.
- 3.** International campaign for world disarmament.
- 4.** International campaign against forced underdevelopment in all forms (educational, industrial, agricultural).
- 5.** International campaign against further capitalist looting of nature and ecocide.
- 6.** International campaign for the development of ecologically-sound energy sources (see A-4 above).

7. International campaign to reverse the trend toward ecologically-unsound monoculture and destruction of crop gene pools (e.g., recreation of varietal wheat instead of the present few fragile and overlarge types, and for a shift away from petrochemical fertilizers).

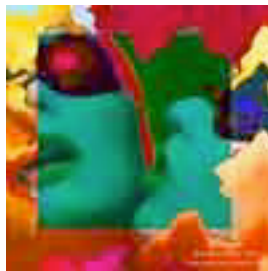
8. Creation of an Agency for International Planning under the direct control of the communist International, to prepare plans for immediate global reconstruction following the seizure of social power by the organized class.



Written by
AD HOC GROUP FOR A NEW INTERNATIONAL

Berkeley, California U.S.A.

26 March 1977



(r)epublished by
LUST for LIFE
<rasputin@teleport.com>
10 December 2002
v1.0