

TOWARDS THE REVOLUTION IN BRITAIN

"It may be generally pointed out that the turning of the subject into a predicate, and the predicate into a subject, the inversion of the determining into the determined always signifies the next revolution".

Marx: The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

INTRODUCTION: The students and workers in France have shown that it is possible to invert "the determining and the determined". In the Universities they demonstrated that what the academic bureaucracy claimed to represent learning was no more than the search for a comfortable career. In the trade unions and parties of the left they exposed the fact that the bureaucrats were interested only in their well-paid routine functions and feared social revolution. For a time routines were overthrown; imagination took power, creation became the order of the day. In other European countries and in the U.S.A. similar pointers to the next revolution have taken place. What can students in Britain do ?

THE CONFLAGRATION IN FRANCE: In the three weeks that shook the world, students and workers erupted into the ideologies which had concealed the realities of capitalism. We know now, thanks to them, that the French State had grown into a monstrous excrescence on French society. The grotesque posturing of the senile head of state and of his gang of educated morons had made the mediaeval routines of the Universities even more contemptible. The whole state system was a shell containing nastiness, the trade unions and the parties were means of preserving old illusions. Students were the detonators which burst open these structures. Their revolt was based in the first place on the inadequacy of the University system - producing diplomas for those for whom there were no jobs; and next, on the University's adaptation to the techno-bureaucratic requirements of the society. This revolt was both intensified and broadened by a small group of students in Nanterre. Their inventiveness and audacity compelled the University and the Ministry first to make concessions and later to close the University. They saw them then only as juvenile delinquents. However, they had succeeded in uniting a large number of different revolutionary groupings in the 22nd of March Movement. Their theoretical understanding had been deepened through discussion and through participation in demonstrations in support of the Vietnamese Revolution, which were attacked by the police and by right wing elements. The brutality of the police when the authorities closed down the University brought large number of University staff over to the side of the students. The taking over of the Sorbonne was a symbolic act, equivalent to the storming of the Bastille. In the general conflagration which followed young doctors and research workers took control of hospitals and research institutes. Workers occupied factories. And although the power of the state was in question, the movement fluctuated between revolution and reform. The revolutionary pole was represented by the students. The reformist pole was that of the workers. The students incorporated into their activities the lessons of the Paris Commune, the Revolution of 1917, the Spanish Revolution and the Cultural Revolution in China. Their model was that of workers councils; they attempted to create in the universities self-governing soviets. In them they tried to abolish the distinction between intellectual and manual work. They tried to create Communist Utopias where grammar school pupils, workers, intellectuals and students could all co-operate. But the workers were concerned with such matters as wage increases and trade union recognition only. However, for a short time they had shown that some at least of the determined had overcome their determination.

THE POSSIBILITIES IN BRITAIN: It must be remembered that the next Revolution in Britain will be the first. The dead weight of inertia and tradition in Britain is much heavier than in France. It would be a mistake to attempt to apply directly the methods of the French to Britain. The sit-ins and take overs in British Universities have not detonated any activity among British workers; it is unlikely that they will produce any very

important changes in the structure of the bureaucracies in British Universities. Although the fusion of revolutionary tendencies among students in France helped to bring about the change, a similar development here would bring about only confusion.

The first need is for the setting up of revolutionary student committees in the different universities, determined to confront the bureaucracies and win demands. They will have to learn about revolution in the process. When these organisations have acquired some basis in the Universities, Technical and Training Colleges, the time for fusion or Federation will have arrived: not before!

A COMMON PROGRAMME: At the present time the most that can be expected is the working out of a general programme which will be applied to the specific condition of particular institutions. This programme will include: the proposals for 'student power' set out in the document: Towards a Revolutionary Student Movement: viz, democratic control over higher education, control of staff appointments, courses, facilities, the abolition of the examination system, etc. These separate units of 'student power' will require to conduct experiments of all kinds over a considerable period. Meanwhile students will acquire experience of working class struggles through participation as groups in strikes, demonstrations, etc. The main activities of students, however, must be in the mobilisation of the forces in the universities.

These will be concerned with the exposure of the privileged position which students enjoy in relation to the education available for working class youth. A thorough review of the place Universities may be expected to occupy in the present society must be undertaken. The extension of University facilities to the society means the incorporation of the society into the University. The breaking down of the existing hostility and prejudice between workers and students must be undertaken very seriously.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND RACISM: Students are in a position to provide support for national liberation struggles. The work of making the Revolution in Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam a part of the general experience of all people in British society, is something which they can undertake seriously. Opposition to the racist policies of 'immigration control' and 'integration'; support for the organisation of others groups within Britain such as 'Black Power' must be a fundamental part of revolutionary student activity.

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION: Students can play their part in the revolutionary process by rousing in themselves and in the masses moments of enthusiasm in which they can associate and mingle with society at large. The aims of the student movement must become the aims and interests of all sections of society. In the name of the general interest, they can push forward material forces to take political power. "We are nothing but we should be everything" is the slogan they should throw at their enemies. This is the new generation which aspires to be the subject of society's general consciousness, so as to determine the predicate, the British Revolution.

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