STUDENT POWER

and WORKERS' CONTROL

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At 2.30 p.m., October 23rd 1956, 12,000 Hungarian students and youths gathered in Petofi Square, Budapest - and then led by the Students' Revolutionary Council they started the famous march, which sparked off the Hungarian Revolution - a revolution not against socialism but against the notorious Hungarian police-state.(1)

More recently the Czech students and Polish Students have similarly demonstrated their power - "student power" - to oppose reactionary forces in their societies, and the Western press has cheered them for their efforts. However, student revolt is obviously not confined to the police-states of Eastern Europe and the reactionary regimes of Latin America. It has become a permanent feature of the new politics of the West, much to the annoyance of many of the same people, who give so much vocal support to our comrades in Eastern Europe.

What are your impressions of revolutionary students in this country? Long-haired "yobos" who are wasting their grants and your money? Unkempt rowdies and political hooligans inspired by nothing more than a love of mob violence? This is the language of the British press, but not only the press of this country? Funnily enough exactly the same adjectives are used to describe our comrades - student militants not just in Rome, Berlin and Paris - BUT in the "communist" capitals as well, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest. Here too, the students are described as "irresponsible troublemakers", "beatnik minorities" except during a brief period of freedom in Czechoslovakia.

The conclusion is obvious. The ruling groups both East and West are frightened of "student power", students acting together to demand fresh and more democratic societies - demands that are equally relevant whether people are living in Britain or in Poland. The forms of exploitation are different, but the fundamentals are the same. The real enemy is in one's own society - not somewhere across the Channel. The cold war is a diversion from the class war as the interest of all workers and students are the same - real democracy in all sectors of their respective societies.....from 'Moscow to Washington' etc. from Prague to Chicago.....

Whilst the Labour Government hypocritically condemns aggression in Czechoslovakia yet condones aggression in Vietnam and Biafra the students of the world have led the demonstrations against all aggression whoever commits it - this is the nature of any socialist movement. Our allies are not government or nations, but the peoples who are struggling against this ugly world that capitalism has shaped and dominated for so long ..... but perhaps not much longer.

ON STUDENT POWER IN BRITAIN

Beneath all the sensational tripe written about students, lies an attempt to do two things. The first is to inflame public opinion against students, such that they become a scape-goat for the frustrations and ills of a society in crisis (and there is no doubt that Britain is in a state of crisis!) They become the mirror of the failure of our society, the failure of

capitalism - and when the older generation looks into that mirror, the guilty sight provokes temper and rage, which becomes directed indiscriminantly against the general student body. Hence the hysteria about students is similar to the prejudices against coloured immigrants, we both provide ready scapegoats to hurl abuse against - instead of hurling the attacks at those responsible for our social and economic ills - the bankers, industrialist and all those who actively support our financial masters.....or in other words against the system that not only exploits us materially, but psychologically as well by fostering the prejudices which isolate students from workers, and workers from students, (as well as white workers from coloured workers.).

In the second place "student-baiting" very often serves to disguise the real political role of students as the main opposition to the capitulation of the Labour Government to capitalism. And this is an opposition which will not just last three years - the student struggle from now on will be a permanent feature of the political scene as any real force for socialism rapidly evaporates from the traditional political arenas - the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Parliament.

This does not mean that revolution is just round the corner, it does mean that we believe that the "gospel of socialism" preached by the Labour Government does more for the hearts, minds and bank-balances of industrialists than for the sadly-disillusioned ranks of Labour supporters and the much larger group of ex-Labour Party supporters.

this - taking group action to change their own working conditions. Next time the headlines of the paper scream about student "riots" or some such reference to action against university authorities (i.e. our management), just remember how similar the press treat any industrial action (e.g. the Seaman's Strike 1966).

Apparently there are two separate groups of "troublemakers" those who operate in industry, and those who operate in education to disrupt our perfect society!!!

STUDENT DEMANDS

(1) The number one demand that has dominated the thinking of radical students is - THAT STUDENTS SHALL NOT BE A PRIVILEGED GROUP IN SOCIETY.(2) We believe everyone has a right to higher education - and most people have the intelligence to participate Students are not different from any other workers except that they are the lucky ones that made it. Even those with the right qualifications often don't get in, as this October 15,000 such youngsters will not be able to find places at Universities for one reason, and one reason only - Britain prefers to spend money on killing people (arms expenditure), than on educating them. (3) If you are not a student, don't blame students for being privileged - blame the system that has deprived you of the same educational opportunity (4) opportunities that we are fighting to extend.

(5) All other student demands should be understood against this background of militant students rejecting this imposed privileged status, and seeking to join a common struggle against the "free" society, which isn't really free, unless you are well acquainted

with the ranks of the top 10% who own over 80% of the wealth in the country.

(2) What students demand is the democratic control of all colleges which is just one aspect of the workers' control campaigns student/staff control of colleges (or knowledge factories as they are at present) is very similar to demands for workers' control in industry. In fact, in the colleges, the students are the WORKERS against the college governors or management. A student sit-in is in fact the student form of industrial action i.e. it is our strike for a better way of life. Every university is run like a factory in fact the management is irresponsible - elected by no-one, and accountable not to the workers (students) but to a bureaucracy above them. Of course the differences are we have no shareholders, and the essential university product is the mind of the student, which has to be moulded along lines of capitalist thinking, such that the graduate student will readily accept a job in later life, which involves joining exploiters of the world - joining the ranks of management. Student power is the rejection of higher education as a training for future capitalists.

What will socialist students do when they leave college? The answer is that we have to use our learning etc. for the benefit of the Labour Movement - it is better to be on the dole than to accept a capitalist job like advertising for example.

Democratic control means elections of all those concerned in the day-to-day running of the institution. Professors must be elected - democracy means the abolition of the class struggle

in society where one group of people rule - and the masses are ruled over. Socialist democracy is fundamentally based on the notion that the only good managers are "worker-managers" elected from the shop-floor in industry, and elected from a general assembly of students and teachers in universities. This is what the high-sounding phrases of democracy and freedom are all about - <u>all power to the masses of students and workers</u>

This second demand is the general objective of all exploited groups in society i.e. power for their members. This means STUDENT POWER, BLACK POWER, and why not TEACHERS' POWER (against headmasters), TENANTS POWER (against landlords and the G.L.C.), but all these movements and struggles may be united together under the general revolutionary banner of WORKERS' POWER. Unless we have recognition of this unity, the Enoch Powells of this world will merely set one struggle against the other, by exploiting the prejudices we have been brought up with.

The Hungarian Revolution only came about because millions of workers spontaneously supported the students in 1956, the same in France in 1968.

Other student demands like workers' demands are of a less "revolutionary" nature but again parallel workers' demands all the way.

(3) Demands for higher grants for students parallel demands in the work place, for wage increases. Socialist students are concerned to make this a common struggle against the Incomes Policy[7] as we have no wish to achieve our increases at the

expense of any other working group or underprivileged section of the population.

(4) Our demand for control over student discipline i.e. no student shall be banned without acceptance by students' union is the same as workers' demands for control over hiring and firing and questions of dismissal.

(5) Students and workers have a common demand, 'Opening the Books' which in our case concerns how much research at British universities actually assists the American War of aggression in Vietnam or chemical and biological warfare in general.

(6) Students demand control over their studies i.e. what we learn and how we learn it. If we do economics then maybe we want to learn about other aspects than merely how to run capitalism - maybe Karl Marx even in 1968 is a better economist than Barbara Castle? Anyway if economics students are never allowed to design their own courses (i.e. their own working conditions) they will never find out. And maybe present teaching methods are useless - then the student must improve them, which may involve abolishing examinations. (8) These matters are exactly parallel to job organization in the factory, and the question of how much control workers have over organizing production.

Then of course we have various minor grievances which are particular to a college or student life.

(7) But the over-riding demand concerns this - what is education for? (8) Why are we students? And these questions in the factory can be rephrased as: why should we work more efficiently? Why should we increase productivity? What is the general and social purpose of the factory?

The point of these basic questions is that do the daily activities of students and workers contribute to the greater good of mankind? Or do they mainly contribute to making the richer nations richer, the poorer nations poorer - And inside the former lining/pockets of the faceless men who sit on boards of directors* ? (9)

Many universities are subsidised by private industry, and thus the interests of big business and university managements are closely interlocked. Sometimes major industrialists have a big say in running a university (e.g. Paul Chambers (I.C.I.) sits on Boards of the London School of Economics.) This fact in itself necessitates closer co-operation between students and workers in alliance against both the capitalists, and the press that serves THEM and tries to divide us.

EDUCATION - And the story of how we don't get it under capitalism.

Let's all think back to our schooldays. You probably hated them if you're an average worker. School is rather like an obstacle race - tests, 11+ exam, more tests, "O" level, "S" level, "A" level - and more tests, and more grades, and they call it education!

That is the great "con" ! Of course we learn some essentials like reading and writing but there is one thing that they never teach you - HOW TO THINK. This means asking questions, any questions, particular questions that teachers find embarrassing to answer. This is because thinking can be dangerous! This is where we return to the subject of critical social awareness.

Schools do not foster this. In a sense they can't because of all the grading, and yes, all the conditioning. Schooling

becomes the intellectual rat-race of society, the scramble to get to the top of the educational ladder. Students in a sense have been the lucky ones who have scrambled to the top - the students in the revolt are the ones who, having got to "the top" don't like the view. Instead of pleasant social scenery, we see the ugly landscape of a class society, in which more than seven million live in poverty, in which millions more suffer stunted lives in factories week in and week out, and in which at the bottom unemployment grows, and at the top wealth continues to abound.

So what all this means is that from the point of view of every man, who has spent the best years of his life in industry - education, class education, was largely responsible for depriving him of what was his right - higher education. Doubtless shunted off to a secondary modern school at the age of eleven, the average kid from a working class home doesn't stand a chance of success in the "rat race."

They say times have changed - that now everyone has an equal chance. They call it the "ladder of opportunity", which means that anyone who can get onto the bottom rung, has a 99% chance of falling off on the way up, and instead of education all that's created is ability to climb ladders.

Selection in our society means eliminating the children of the workers from the higher echelons of society. From generation to generation it is the same social group who perform the unwanted jobs in society - dustman, milkman, workmen in sewers, lavatory attendants. This is no accident. When the people were at school they were made to feel inferior - and

so intellectually they behaved as they were labelled in class - in the botto stream. This is what conditioning (they call it "brainwashing" for Russia) is all about - getting people to accept their stations in life. If you fail enough little "intelligence" - games/tests invented by affluent but incompetent psychologists, then sooner or later you will really come to believe that you are intellectually inferior - that managers are really more superior people to you. Every employer can blind his employees with figures and statistics, so can Barbara Castle too - not that does not increase your real standard of living one iota or one farthing.

INTELLIGENCE

Yes, we students too can play around statistics - and we know just how often the whole show is a fraud. And our ability to do this is no less a question of intelligence, than the educational opportunity to develop some of our natural abilities. Now we all have these natural abilities in slightly different proportions, what is significant is that very few are allowed to develop them. In Britain too prcbably over 70% of the population have never had the chance - and the fact is that capitalism can never allow the majority to get that chance - that vital opening in the class structure. Just think of the situation of 15 million workers who exactly understand the nature of British capitalism, and how many hours every week were spent contributing to the profits of shareholders and directors in private industry. There would be national strikes until the workers ran their own factories and industries.

Realisation of this, forces the educational system to be reduced to passing and failing examinations, in this way capitalist modes of thought and behaviour are preserved.(10) This is how the wretched system really works through the minds of workers as well as through the actions of capitalists. Capitalism needs people to fail so that others will go on to succeed in the authoritarian system. The authoritarian (or capitalist) premise creates a drug - power - and addicts get to the top. There must be TOP people, so the educational system must produce them.(11)

But they argue selection is necessary, there is an indefatigable zeal on the part of our society to distinguish between people, a passion for ranking in terms of grades and status. Thus the virus of the streaming philosophy has even infected comprehensive schools so that the working-class child still loses out in the scramble to the top.

However the essential point to establish is that passing exams, and getting good grades DOES NOT PROVE high intelligence. <u>In other words intelligence does not equal the ability to climb social ladders.</u> This is the capitalist equation on educational opportunity, it is a monstrous lie.

This lie has been proved many times, and a close up report in "The Times" of October 2nd on psychology illustrated just this point. It reported that many teachers have noticed that children of low social status with I.Q.'s

in the range of 60 - 80 appear much brighter on the playground and out of school than their middle or upper middle class counterparts in the same I.Q. range". The fact is then that the real problem is that I.Q. is a measure not of intelligence but of environment (parents, neighbourhood and class), and that there remain vast reservoirs of untapped intelligence in the minds of British workers because they hate the schooling system (quite rightly). But in rejecting the system, they also rejected the main opportunity of climbing out of the system, to explore the real frontiers of education. For most of those who say goodbye to the intellectual rat-race at the tender age of eleven, will then leave school at fifteen with large areas of their intellect suppressed forever by the dreary experiences of their school-life, which is unfortunately equated with education.

No, this wasn't education - it was more like "brainwashing", convincing the secondary modern children that the grammer school children were superior - the psychological process continues with streaming in comprehensives.

In this way then, class background is graded and streamed(8), and these arbitrary distinctions are rationalized and justified on the basis of very specious and suspect arguments about intelligence. We know in fact that all children are intelligent when their interest is aroused - that intelligence is a matter of motivation - and that middle class children are more motivated by examinations, and academic success than their working class counterparts.

EDUCATIONAL VALUES.

The major conclusion on the matter of intelligence is that capitalist society produces an education system based on a process of rewards and punishments (success and failure), which have nothing to do with intelligence, and that school-kids are trained to respond to certain stimuli, like rats are trained by psychologists(12).

The educational values which are propagated, are not only anti-socialist but anti social and anti-educational as well. Competition is everything, only success matters, and for the failures only the consolations of the Welfare State are left. The hidden assumption of all tests and examinations is that whatever the standard, a certain percentage must fail because only a few can have the "TOP JOBS", only a few can give the orders, only a few can be successes. Thus what schooling does at an early age is to instil a pseudo-reverence for those in authority over us, to instil the belief that human nature demands that every society will be based on the rich and the poor - and though the poor may sometimes get richer; they can never actually take control, responsibility and power over their own factories, or other places of work.

Thus this early propaganda will be reinforced in later life by managerial jargon, the brandishing of paper qualifications, and the intimidating arrogance of the public-school tie. After this little lot it is not surprising that with the assistance of Cecil King, workers don't shout everyday for control of their factories. And it is this "little lot" that student power is determined to undermine by challenging at the roots this compulsory miseducation of the child born under capitalism.

We want to abolish examinations, streaming, public schools, and authoritarian education from the top downwards and from the bottom upwards - to do this we need the committed assistance of teachers and the Labour Movement.

AN ALLIANCE OF STUDENTS AND WORKERS.

Student power then is the philosophy of a new movement - a movement of young people in revolt against the world of modern capitalism, which uses higher education as its servicing station - both for new capitalists, and for the many ranks of specialists upon which our rulers are becoming increasingly dependant.

But technology does not solve political problems - matters of power and control over the lives of millions; technology is only a means to anend. How a factory is organized, how production is organized - are supremely political matters which makes the political parties look like midgets in comparison. The big corporations like Unilever, I.C.I., and Shell are the political giants - and it is inside these firms that the real politics of the nation are decided, rather than as the constitutional myth would have it - the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Party, or the Government.

Students are revolutionaries because we resist the de-facto government by these big monopolies - we resist on campuses, and in the streets, and anywhere that effective protest can still be developed.

We want to work with our comrades in other industries because we are all part of a wider movement to create a totally different sort of society - a sort of society in which we, as "professional" full-time students will cease to exist, because all the population will be studying part of the time, and all

From now on students will be sacrificing the bait of well paid jobs to continue in earnest, the revolt that has begun in their student days, such that students too will remain allies of workers in industry. Meanwhile the press will continue to rant and rave against us, they will write condemnations against the use of violence, whilst hypocritically ignoring the violence perpetrated by the so-called democratic Government of the United States, in Vietnam, and in Latin-America, and so many other countries too.

Although we are NOT committed to any love of violence, far from it - the very reverse is true. I personally loathe violence, but we loate even more the hypocrisy of the Labour Government over their Incomes Policy, Vietnam and Biafra. And if a policeman attacks either myself of my comrades - we will not stand still. We are not pacifists * (13)

In these pages I have tried to describe what this international movement of student revolt is all about. It is certainly very much about the so-called "nobodies" of the world who are contemptuously used by armies and politicians alike. To hell with the politicians say the students, we are <u>all</u> political actors now - <u>wherever we work, we can work for socialism</u> - through education, by demonstrations, and by methods of direct action and resistance - "sit-ins", strikes, occupations and finally WORKERS' CONTROL.

In Spain, in France, in countries of Latin America the student - worker alliance for socialism is a reality and has been for many years. The same sort of alliance is essential in this country too - and the shop stewards movement provides

the sort of links which have to make contact with the two militant student organizations - R.S.A. (Radical Student Alliance formed January 1967) and the more recently formed R.S.S.F. (Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation). United we stand, divided we fall. Vive la revolution - peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.

Summary of the Aims of the student movement.

(1) Democracy in higher education - student/teacher control of colleges.

(2) Free Universities and colleges - open to all workers - more places and more students - opposition to universities only for a privileged few.

(3) Democratic control of courses (as well as government[1]) - no examinations, more participation of students in lectures etc.

(4) Opposition to research carried on in U.K. universities for U.S. War in Vietnam or for biological and chemical warfare.

(5) Reform of schools - more democracy - spontaneous and creative education - fully comprehensive without streaming - abolition of headmasters.

(6) More finance to be spent on education in general - opposition to economic policies of the Labour Government.

(7) Support for all other student and worker struggles - "sitins" and strikes. Solidarity with all workers against capitalism - and against bureaucratic oppression (Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968).

(8) Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination.

(9) Support for all struggles of political liberation - social revolution against colonialism and imperialism.

Hence: (a) support for Vietnamese and their political resistance through the N.L.F. (vietcong) against American aggression.

(b) Support for Freedom Fighters of Rhodesia and South Africa.

(10) Rejection of parliamentary politics for the politics of direct action non-violent where possible - full support for demands of Workers' Control over all industries.

We stand for socialist democracy* not the half-baked "democracy" of charlatans under capitalism.

FOOTNOTES

(1) In spite of Western propaganda the truth is that the Hungarians were consciously fighting for socialism, hence the popularity of the one communist they trusted, Imre Nagy.
Worth reading is

13 Days that Shook the Kremlin - by Tibor Meray.

HUNGARY '56 by Andy Anderson. A Solidarity Publication
(4/3d post free) 53A Westmoreland Rd.Bromley,Kent.

(2) See Penguin on - France May 1968.

(3) Only 5% of the age group in Britain are students - this does not compare favourably with other countries.

(4) Throughout Western Europe it is a fact that the children of workers are very under-represented in universities. In Britain class difference in educational opportunity "RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF SOME 96 OUT OF EVERY 100 MANUAL WORKING CLASS FROM FULL-TIME EDUCATION BEFORE THE AGE OF 17".

Alan Little & John Westergaard, British Journal of Sociology.
(December 1964 pp. 301-16)

(5) Good analysis of inequality in Britain today is article :-
"THE UNEQUAL SOCIETY" by ROBIN BLACKBURN.

"THE INCOMPATIBLES" A Penguin Special on
Trade Union Militancy.

(6) See Penguin Special "STUDENTS IN REVOLT" Out in Jan.1969.

(7) All economic jargon about productivity is a capitalist diversion from a socialist struggle.

(8) See "Education or Examination" by Tom Fawthrop, on the case for education without exams.

R.S.A. Publications,
103 Borough High Street,
London Bridge, London.

(9) "The Controllers" Michael Barratt Brown. Universities and the Left Review - and Institute for Workers' Control.

(10) The school system is in fact very successful in closing minds to political realities - that is why, the students in revolt, who can say what a fraud all their statistics very often are - tend to be a minority. Most students have been successfully conditioned to accept capitalism.

(11) The militant students are the ones who not only, don't want to be "TOP PEOPLE", but we don't want the system of "TOP PEOPLE" i.e. an end to all bosses, democratic authority instead - WORKERS' COUNCILS.

(12) That is why we call it the "rat race."

(13) The big debate about violence only serves to divert attention from the sickness of the society we live in and the major importance of changing it.

For details of student movements and offers of help, assistance and solidarity write:

R.S.S.F.,
120 Commercial Road,
London, E.1.

R.S.A.,
103 Borough High Street,
London, S.E.1.
(R.S.A. is more closely involved in educational issues and in the National Union of Students.)

Student/workers

unite by:-

(1) joint meetings - to discuss common problems.

(2) Discuss student power at your local branch meetings of trade unions, labour party, etc. We can send speakers.

(3) Establish contacts with your local university by writing to the socialist society or R.S.S.F. group.