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WHOSE LEADING ROLE?

For some time the Polish government tried to force the new independent trade union "SOLIDARITY" to write a clause into its charter recognizing "the leading role of the United Workers Party" (the Polish governing party).

In the other East European self-styled "socialist" countries this leading role is taken for granted.

Brezhnev, for example, is leader of the communist party and head of state. As leader of the party he can put forward the course of action he thinks the state should follow. As head of state he can use state power to crush any opposition to his plans, whether from inside or outside the party. The party will, of course, use its powers of ideological persuasion to ensure that Brezhnev continues to have such unlimited power. And so on.

Clearly some people think that once an organisation has called itself a communist or workers' party it has a leading role for all time.

If parties were started by saints and guaranteed only to recruit saints, this might be a good idea. The rest of us could go home certain that our welfare was in good hands. However, in the real world, the leading role of a party must be earned and not legislated.

All society depends upon the productive working class. A genuine communist party takes the standpoint of that class.

This does not mean that middle class, or even upper class, people cannot join that party, provided that they change their class standpoint.

Nor does it mean that all productive workers have to join the party. Many may prefer to sit back, go out and enjoy themselves, or work their way into another class. Only the advanced workers,

willing to devote much of their time to advancing the interests of their class, will join the party.

The party is thus the leadership of the productive working class. But the only power which it has is the power of persuasion. The party can persuade because the class as a whole sees that the party's policies are in its interests.

It is therefore not up to working class organisations to write into their constitutions the leading role of a communist party. It is up to the communist party to earn that leading role. The party can only do this by recruiting people with the standpoint of the productive working class and casting out those who have lost this standpoint.

IN BRITAIN

There is no party in Britain representing the interests of the productive working class. This makes it very difficult to analyse issues like the mini-Budget, the firemen's pay claim, etc, from a productive working class standpoint.

For example, an engineer could say that the firemen should get their 18.8%. Or a miner may consider that a nurse deserves more pay. But history has very few examples of firemen and nurses standing up for engineers and miners. And engineers and miners have to pay the rates and taxes to pay the firemen and nurses.

The lesson is that, if you stand up for somebody else's class interests when you are not capable of standing up for your own, you are indirectly attacking your own interests.

Another problem is opposing Russian expansionism. Nearly everybody in this country has an interest in keeping the Russians out. The productive working class has an interest in keeping them out. The middle class has. The capitalist class has. Etc. And, in general, that's where the community of interests ends.

Yet another problem is starvation in the Third World. In essence, people are starving in the Third World because there are too many unproductive people here consuming too much. But characters like Heath maintain that the best way for workers here to help the Third World is to sacrifice their jobs. Then Ceylonese workers will be able to do those jobs for £4 a week and improve their standard of living. Nobody mentions that the multinational firms and the unproductive consumers will do well out of the increased profits and cheaper goods.

Whatever the crisis the capitalist class, the middle class and the rest, will seek to turn it to their own account.

Until it has a party capable of working out a wider perspective the productive working class would be very foolish to support anybody's class interests but its own.

ULTRA-LEFTIST "STRUGGLE"

Class Struggle, the journal of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain, gave advice to carworkers in its November issue. It denounced the "misleaders", such as AUEW presidential candidates DUFFY and WRIGHT, for the low pay increases offered to the Leyland and Ford workers.

It is, of course, commonplace for the ultra-left to denounce the people that the workers have actually chosen to vote for as misleaders. The implication is that, if the workers had been in their right mind, they would have voted for the ultra-left candidate.

However, the RCLB did not, to the best of our knowledge, have a candidate. So one can only presume that the RCLB regards union ballots as some sort of capitalist conspiracy.

What is left to the hapless workers faced with opposition from government, employers, unions and misleaders? The workers must "struggle", says the RCLB.

Struggle, of course, is excellent. However, actual ordinary workers have to engage in this struggle. Being ordinary, they will be influenced by management arguments such as declining world markets and no more cash in the kitty. Unless these arguments are answered, the struggle will collapse.

So far, the rank and file have shown no signs of being able to answer these arguments. The RCLB itself presents no analysis of the car industry from a working class point of view.

Thus all the RCLB's call for struggle amounts to is sheer hypocrisy.

KANG SHENG

The news was released in November that KANG SHENG, formerly Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee, who died in 1975, has now been posthumously expelled from the Communist Party of China.

Reference to issues of Peking Review for the late 1960s reveals that Kang Sheng was, to a large extent, responsible for the international relations of the Communist Party.

At that time certain cliques in each country were recognised as the

genuine leaders of the working class in that country. Thus the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) was recognised in Britain. In numerous cases, the favoured clique had its leader individually recognised by the CPC. With any luck he might have his photo taken standing between Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao.

Leading members of such cliques often benefitted from free trips to China, travel and all expenses paid. Buffet suppers at the Embassy were commonplace. Supplies of free literature were made available for the clique to sell for its funds. There were also intangible benefits like help in making contacts.

The cliques supplied the CPC with acceptable lies about the excellent revolutionary situation in the various countries, thereby reinforcing the ultra-left clique in the CPC itself.

The leadership of the working class in any country will be determined by that working class itself. Recognition proved to be about the dirtiest trick that could be played on the International Marxist-Leninist Movement. Half a generation of revolutionaries were brought up to believe that International recognition was what counted.

As for Kang Sheng himself, nobody should escape condemnation simply because he has died. Such condemnation cannot do him any harm. But, if we learn the lesson, it can do the rest of us a lot of good.

SACU - TO BROADEN OUT OR LIMIT MEMBERSHIP

At the 1980 AGM of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding the following resolution was proposed by the Council of Management:-

"This Annual General Meeting recognises that SACU's aims are 'to promote understanding and friendship between the British and Chinese people'. These aims do not imply uncritical support for China's Party and Government policies. Accordingly, this Annual General Meeting: (a) encourages members who disagree with the apparent changes in China to remain in SACU; (b) calls for the promotion throughout SACU of open debate on the issues involved."

Some RCLB supporters proposed an amendment so that part of the resolution would read:-

"These aims do not imply uncritical support for all China's Party and Government policies. Accordingly, in the spirit of promoting the fundamental aims of friendship and understanding with the government and people of China and on the basis of serious investigation of the facts, this Annual General Meeting (a) encourages members who have some disagreements with the changes in China, etc".

For the amendment, Chris Burford said "It is inevitable that people who believe China is going down the wrong road will drift out." An opponent said "It is not SACU's business to have friendship with the Chinese government". The amendment secured only 12 votes.