

**Pamphlet**

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**SOCIAL DEMOCRACY**

Social democracy is increasingly asserting itself as a growing tendency within the people's and working-class movement in Quebec. Pro-worker in theory but serving the bourgeoisie in practice, this tendency originated and took hold mainly in Europe. Up until now it had never succeeded in developing a working-class base in Quebec.

Neither the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) nor the NDP, the Canadian social democratic party created in the wake of the anti-communist campaigns waged jointly by the CCF and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in the 1950's, were ever able to overcome the Quebecois people's indifference regarding their programmes.

## A way for the bourgeoisie to respond to the growing struggles

After the Second World War, US imperialism greatly increased its investments in Quebec, thus profoundly modifying the Quebec economy. It then became necessary to modernize the Quebec State. In effect, the government had to provide the capitalists with the qualified workers and technicians that they needed. It had to implement social policies, and reforms capable of restraining people's demands. It also had to nationalize certain economic sectors, like electricity and the steel industry, which were not very profitable, considering the investments needed to modernize them. This growing monopolization of the Quebec economy and the transformation of the role of the Quebec State had several consequences.

First of all, they led to the political decline of certain segments of the bourgeoisie and their replacement by new ones. For instance, the traditional petty-bourgeoisie — small shopkeepers, doctors, lawyers — saw its influence declining to the benefit of a new intellectual petty bourgeoisie made up of professors, civil servants, community organizers, etc... As for the middle industrial bourgeoisie, ruined by the monopolies, it was supplanted by an intermediate "nationalized" bourgeoisie that includes high-level civil servants and the administrators of corporations nationalized or created by the State, like Hydro, the Quebec Deposit and Investment Fund, the General Investment Corporation...

On the political level, these changes were reflected in the decline of the Union Nationale and the rise of the Parti Quebecois. Since these new segments of the petty and middle bourgeoisie found their development blocked by the concentration of powers in Ottawa, they aspired to an ever greater autonomy in relation to the rest of Canada. The fumbling of the Quiet Revolution caused some of them to espouse the cause of political independence, their only means of becoming valid intermediaries of imperialism.

The penetration of monopolies also produced certain changes within the working class, considerably developing the labour aristocracy, i.e., a small segment of specialized workers who, in relation to the rest of the workers, enjoy privileged working conditions, especially in terms of wages. With a standard of living comparable to that of the petty-bourgeoisie, this labour aristocracy has a tendency to identify its class interests with those of the petty-bourgeoisie. It serves as an agent of bourgeois ideology by transmitting reformism among the working class.

The fact that this labour aristocracy assumes the leadership of labour centres where it comes into close contact with unions composed of certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, like professors and civil servants, means that this tendency in the working class movement is even stronger.

Furthermore, the modernization of the State reinforced union bureaucrats' power by giving them, through a reform of the Labour Code, control of collective bargaining.

However, the intensification of the national oppression of the Quebecois people resulting from the increased penetration of US imperialism and the worldwide imperialist crisis led to a radicalization of the working-class movement and of certain sections of the petty-

bourgeoisie. Faced with this new combativity which increasingly calls into question the capitalist system and the bourgeois State, the capitalist class has two weapons at its disposal. And if direct repression remains the bourgeoisie's preferred method of containing struggles at the present time, it is at the same time also trying to co-opt the most combative elements of the working-class movement.

Social democracy, which recruits its followers mainly from the State-employed and unionized petty-bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy, has been designated to carry out this policy. It has been given the job of conveying to the workers the idea that reforms are all that is necessary to right the injustices of capitalism, and that they can be obtained by waging more aggressive economic struggles and, ultimately, by being elected as government.

## European social democracy

A look at European social democracy is enough to convince us of the true role played by social democracy.

The worldwide crisis of capitalism has meant speedups and spiralling inflation combined with rising unemployment for both the European and Quebec working class. It has thus led to an important development of people's and working-class struggles. This increase in struggles is, for the time being, mainly co-opted by social democracy, because the latter has been solidly rooted in the European working-class movement since the First World War.

The tactics of social democracy vary with the country. In Germany, where fascism managed to totally destroy the Communist Party, and in England, where the communist movement has never succeeded in taking root, social-democracy has become the traditional alternative to the openly bourgeois parties. In times of prosperity, its role is that of an impotent official opposition. In times of economic crisis, assisted by the bourgeoisie and by the union organizations that it controls, it is elected as the government and passes a few reforms that allow the capitalists to catch their breath. In both cases, it diverts the working class from its struggle.

For instance, in England the strike of the miners fighting against low wages caused the fall of the Heath government and brought to power the social-democrats of the Labour Party. The latter, once in power, robbed the working class of its victory over the conservative right. In the name of the defence of its "workers" government and with the collaboration of union bureaucracy, the Labour Party saddled the working class with wage controls. Meanwhile, inflation kept on spiralling upwards.

However, if the absence of working-class alternatives enabled social democracy to easily co-opt the workers' combativity in certain countries, this has not been the case everywhere. In France, for example, it is not alone in its claim to canalize working-class combativity for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. In effect, it must reckon with the revisionist Communist Party that wants to get a better price — including the nationalization of certain monopolies and a scaling-down of repression — for selling-out the working class... Therefore, because it does not control the independent union organizations or those led by the Communist Party and thus cannot, by itself, divert the workers' class struggle, it must form an alliance with these parties and harden its positions.

Nevertheless, whatever the means, the results are the same. By refusing to call into question the very existence of capitalism, it leaves the working class unarmed, without a fighting organization, to face the bourgeoisie. Moreover, when close to power, it even abandons the most immediate economic demands of the working class.

Thus, during the last presidential election campaign in France, Mitterand, the socialist candidate, put off the application of his programme indefinitely and promised to consolidate the national currency as the bourgeoisie desired.

## The origins of social democracy

Social democrats never, or hardly ever refer to the origins of social democracy. To hear them talk, it's the working class most

recent and greatest invention. However, in fact, it is very old, and if its defenders don't talk much about its history that's because it is the result of the first betrayal or abandonment of Marxist theory and the first of a long series of betrayals of the working-class movement. It is thus useful to shed a little historical light on the origins of social democracy.

It emerged early in the 20th century out of the degeneration of the Second Socialist International which included and co-ordinated the political activities of all the European workers' parties. Its role had consisted mainly in the creation of mass socialist parties in the principal European countries. Since these parties developed in a period of social calm, which, especially in Germany, was the result of a long period of economic prosperity, participation in bourgeois parliaments became the main form of class struggle. Although parliamentary politics could be correct in this conjuncture, many socialist — mainly petty-bourgeois — gradually came to consider it as the only way for the working class to take power.

The most "important" of these were Bernstein, a leader of the German Socialist Party at the end of the 19th century, and Kautsky, the most widely-recognized theorist of the Second International. They were the first to try and justify the abandonment of Marxism.

Although these ideas were violently criticized by Rosa Luxemburg, one of the founders of the German Communist Party, and by Lenin, they had a disastrous effect on the working-class movement on the eve of the First World War.

Thus, reversing their previous decisions according to which no socialist party ought to support its national bourgeoisie in the event of a war between imperialist countries, the social democratic parties, with the exception of the Bolshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party, plunged the working class of the various countries into the war. In this way, they put them in the service of their bourgeoisie. They thus rejected the watchword of the Russian Bolshevik Party which was to profit from the war to defeat the bourgeoisie. The German and French social democrats, among others, entered the government and then, after the war, prevented socialist revolution. In Germany, they murderously crushed the socialist revolution and, after 1921, systematically attacked the newly-founded German Communist Party, thus allowing Hitler's fascists to take power.

By 1921, social democracy's abandonment of Marxism led to the fall of the Second International and the creation of the Third Communist International. Basing itself on the victorious Russian revolution, the communist International reaffirmed the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and of overthrowing the bourgeoisie, and continued to denounce reformism. All the socialist parties in Germany, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia were divided. The majority of their militants formed communist parties, and the cadres and permanent employees remained in the social democratic parties. Today, the Second International is nothing more than a club of the leaders of rightwing parties where Brandt, from Germany, Golda Meir, from Israël, Mitterand, from France, or their successors, meet each year to discuss the "harmonious" development of capitalism...

## Bourgeois ideology within the working class

Although the theoretical foundations of social-democracy were laid by Karl Kautsky and Edward Bernstein at the beginning of the 20th century, it only assumed its current form after the Second World War, during the 1950's. And while earlier it had hidden behind Marxist language and garb, it now definitively abandoned Marxism, and came out saying that Marxism might have given a good description of 19th century capitalism, but it was now outdated.

Forgetting that many sections of the petty-bourgeoisie are be-

coming proletarianized, and that many farmers swell the ranks of urban workers every year, the social democrats claimed that although the working class had been strong and numerous in the 19th century, it now has begun to disappear.

Because of automation and the development of science and technology, workers are supposedly gradually to be replaced by specialists and technicians. Furthermore, the living conditions of the working class are constantly being improved, many specialized workers becoming part of the middle strata. According to the social democrats, the working class can no longer take power because it is too weak, numerically.

Taking their illusion for reality, the social democrats go so far as to claim that the working class no longer even needs to struggle for socialism. For power and socialism will gradually be given to it.

On the one hand, they claim that the workers will succeed in gaining power in the factory thanks to union struggles, thanks to self-management. Thus, by simply becoming the new administrators, workers would take away from the bosses their rights and privileges. To state this is to forget that under capitalism, each enterprise is subject to the laws of the market, to the laws of competition, and that so long as these laws are not done away with, exploitation cannot be done away with. It would only be administered by the workers themselves. In any case, the monopolies will never hand the administration of their enterprises over to the workers. The greatest concession which they will grant the workers is the right to decide "freely" how they are going to meet the production quotas which the capitalists have set.

On the other hand, they claim that capitalism, by favoring the planification of production and the socialization of the productive forces, is bound, as it develops, to lead, gradually and on its own, to socialism. Social democrats believe that all it will take is a few reforms in order to reach socialism. The struggle for power is no longer necessary.

It is true that, today, the goods needed by society are, for the most part, produced by large concentrations of workers grouped together in huge factories where each one accomplishes a very specific task, which is but a minute part of the work necessary for the production of the finished product, ready for consumption. But can we infer from this that we are in a socialist society? Social democrats refuse to understand that the planification and the socialization of the productive forces brought about by the monopolies only serve the interests of the capitalists, and that they only contribute to the sharpening of the contradictions between the bosses and the workers, between the exploiting and exploited nations. They refuse to recognize that, for capitalists, planification is synonymous with greater production at lower costs, while for the workers it is synonymous with speed-ups and increased exploitation.

## "Bourgeois socialism"

According to social democrats, class antagonisms and oppositions no longer exist since capitalist society is evolving naturally towards socialism, and since the working class is in the process of disappearing. It is therefore not a question of overthrowing the bourgeoisie, but rather of reducing social inequalities and of correcting the abuses of capitalism by making it more "civilized".

To do this, some social democratic governments are satisfied with controlling establishment of foreign capital. The more radical ones, like the Chilean government for example, (1) will go so far as to nationalize the monopolies. In either case, the resulting situation is the same for the workers. For even if a few industries are nationalized, the capitalists remain in control of the laws of the market and of political power.

As the French social democratic political scientist Maurice Duverger stated: "The nationalization of large enterprises must, under no circumstances, be accompanied by wildcat occupations or workers'

(1) This refers to the Popular Unity of Allende, overthrown by the fascists in Sept. 1973.

control... Public order must be firmly preserved even if this means restraining the spontaneity of people's movements".

The socialism which social democrats talk about is a bourgeois form of socialism which would establish "harmony" between the various social strata and groups, including the capitalists, and which replaces class struggle by class collaboration and a "social" partnership. It is a socialism which replaces proletarian revolution by a series of reforms which are supposedly obtainable in the context of capitalism, by getting elected to the government.

### The myth of the "neutral" State

Social democrats claim that, to establish socialism, all they have to do is to settle in to the apparatus of the bourgeois State without transforming it, to decree a few reforms, and to proclaim the equality of all citizens. They believe the State to be simply an administrative organ, a "neutral" governmental machine, above classes, which strives for the "general good", the "common good" of all — the exploiters as well as the exploited. They forget that if the present day State, the bourgeois State, assumes certain functions of interest to all, it is only in as far as those interests coincide with the interests of the bourgeoisie. They forget that the State is always an instrument of domination of one class over the others, the instrument which serves to repress the other classes.

Just like they consider that the State, as the guardian of "pure" democracy, is above class distinctions, so, for them, the interest of the nation comes before the interests of the working class. They do not hesitate to massacre millions of workers on the battle-field in order to defend the national bourgeoisie. That was the case in Europe in 1914. It was also the case in Chile. In the name of the so-called superior interests of the "nation", the Allende government disarmed the Chilean workers at the very moment the military was getting ready to crush the people through bloodshed.

Social-democrats blindly believe in the rules of the political game set up by the bourgeoisie. Refusing to recognize the necessity for revolutionary violence, they imagine that the passage from capitalism to socialism will come about with a series of "quiet revolutions", of reforms whose main weapon is the electoral ballot, electoralism. As if, one day, the bourgeoisie will simply agree to let the proletariat take its place! And yet the failure of the Chilean path is there as proof of the fundamentally criminal nature of this political line.

### The union, the privileged instrument of social democracy

Social democrats count on union struggles, on the economic struggles, to reduce capitalist exploitation and to achieve little by little, the socialist transformation of society.

By putting forward self-management, they foster the illusion that, thanks to harder and more radical union struggles, the workers will succeed in gaining power, factory by factory, and that, slowly but surely, they will succeed in eating away at the management rights of the capitalists. In France, the Confederation française démocratique des travailleurs (C.F.D.T.), a social democratic union center presents self-management as a means of putting an end to exploitation.

The winning over of power in factories would be accompanied by the replacement of bourgeois politicians by social democratic ones, without, however, putting into question the State of the bourgeoisie.

Social democrats do not see union struggles as a means of political education for the proletariat, as a way of pointing out the necessity for the political struggle and for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, but as an end in itself. They claim that union struggles can, of themselves, lead to socialism. By fostering this illusion, social democrats prevent the working class from organizing on its own

basis, and channel working class militancy and struggles to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. Having counted on unions to develop working class militancy before the take-over of power, social democrats continue to consider trade-unions their privileged instrument after the take-over of power. However, the role of the latter is to be considerably changed. They will become an instrument which will make possible the enacting of agreements of industrial peace which union bureaucrats will conclude with employers, with the blessing of the social democratic government. Thus, in Sweden, while the employers recognized the workers' right to unionize, to be represented, and to negotiate, the union representatives recognized "the right of the employer to be free to hire and fire workers, to direct and distribute the work, and to hire workers irrespective of their union affiliation, and irrespective of whether or not they are unionized".

Along with the trade unions, cooperatives are also seen as a means of establishing socialism. Production and consumer cooperatives are favored. But since the former are unable to compete with big capital, and since they cannot take over the market which is dominated by monopolies, they must be content with local outlets and limit themselves to a few products of prime necessity, such as food products. It is hard to understand how cooperatives could lead to socialism: in order to survive they must integrate the market. But, in a social democratic regime, the market remains in the hands of the capitalists.

### Social democrats and the national liberation struggles

Since social democrats do not want to do away with capitalist exploitation in their country, but only to tone it down, their position on national liberation movements is hypocritical and ambiguous. They support some national liberation movements to give themselves a progressive appearance, while exploiting workers of so-called underdeveloped countries.

Thus, while they recognize the rights of the Palestinians, they defend the "right of existence" of the Zionist State and of Israeli imperialism. It is not surprising since the Prime Minister of the State of Israël is a member of the Socialist International where he justifies Israël's aggressive policies towards the Arab countries

### Those who haggle for the bourgeoisie

Basing itself on the petty-bourgeoisie, the union bosses and labour aristocracy, social democracy does not want to do away with the contradictions of capitalism, but only to tone them down. That is why social democracy is very useful to the bourgeoisie in a period of crisis, when the contradictions are accentuated, and when the working class becomes more militant. As a matter of fact, in Europe, social democracy has come to power every time the bourgeoisie proved to be incapable of facing a crisis situation. While keeping the economic control, the bourgeoisie temporarily entrusted the social democrats with the burden of political power and left them with no other choice but to adopt unpopular measures in its place.

By using a leftist vocabulary, social democracy attempts to sidetrack the working class onto dead end paths, such as parliamentarism and class collaboration. Strictly opportunist, social democrats only put forward reforms in so far as these reforms make it easier for them to accede to the leading positions of the State and in so far as they do not overly disturb the bourgeoisie's privileges. Haggling for the bourgeoisie, they try to convince the working class to give up the struggle for socialism and above all to give up the dictatorship of the proletariat in exchange for a few reforms.

### Social democracy in Quebec

The first serious attempt to regroup social democrats on a common organizational basis took place in Quebec in 1970, when the FRAP was created. An offspring of citizen's committees, the FRAP waged an electoral struggle against Drapeau's Civic Party. Today, the FRAP having disappeared, the Montreal Citizens' Movement (MCM) has taken over, with an even vaguer program than that of its predecessor.

At the provincial level, social democracy is not an organized force in the labour movement. It is presently only a trend found in the left of the PQ, in the trade unions, and in community organizations.

The left wing of the PQ expresses its social democratic objectives by putting forward reforms whose aim is to attach workers to the band wagon of independence while at the same time maintaining capitalism and imperialism in place.

In response to the radicalization of workers and the failure of hard struggles, such as that of the Common Front, the trade unions have toughened their talk. However, this radicalization is only verbal and attacks only the effects of capitalism on workers. It fails to attack capitalism itself.

Recognizing the PQ's inability to put forward a truly social democratic program, the trade-unions preach the creation of a somewhat hazy workers' party which would be composed of "wage-earners". Such a party, which would seize power by means of democratic elections, is, according to the trade unions, the only way to improve the living conditions of workers.

Alongside with this "workers' party", the trade unions put forward self-management. We can recall the slogan put forward by a teachers' union in the early 70's, taken up by the CNTU, which demanded that workers take over their factories, that teachers take over their schools, and that secretaries take over their offices!

Cooperatism, is also a favorite pet subject of the adepts of the "workers' party". They claim that with cooperatism it would be possible to limit capitalist exploitation in the field of production as well as in the field of consumption. With cooperatism, workers would be able to manage the factories forsaken by the bosses and to keep their jobs. Tembec and Cabano are considered successful examples, when the exploitation there continues as never before. The spreading of Cooprix stores would also be an "instrument of liberation" from the food monopolies.

The question of power is only considered within the boundaries of bourgeois democracy and electoralism, which are seen as the limit of the evolution of society. It is only a question of generalizing its "blessing" to the whole population.

The present conjuncture in Quebec may play in favor of the creation of a social democratic party mainly issued from the trade unions. For the time being, the unions are waiting for the internal contradictions of the Parti Quebecois to develop. They prefer to adopt the position of "critical support" rather than coming out strongly, for fear of isolating themselves from the social democrats within the PQ.

But, be it issued from the trade unions or from the radicalization of the PQ, we have seen in what precedes that the workers have nothing to expect from a social democratic party.

## **The working class must struggle against reformism**

The present struggles of the working class against inflation and unemployment prove, beyond a doubt, that far from dying out, as the social democrats claim, class struggle is, on the contrary, growing.

However, if workers want to put an end to their exploitation, they must organize their political struggle, give themselves the only tool capable of leading them to victory: the revolutionary workers' party. Organized as the Party, the vanguard of the working class must render the proletariat conscious of the necessity of waging a merciless struggle against the bourgeoisie and of overthrowing bourgeois democracy, the dictatorship of Capital, and of establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie.

But in order to succeed, the first task of the Party and of the vanguard of the working class is to denounce the agents of the bourgeoisie who infiltrate into the working class, for as Lenin stated: "one indispensable condition to prepare the proletariat for victory is the prolonged, tenacious and implacable struggle against opportunism, reformism and the other analogous bourgeois influences and currents which are inevitable because the proletariat is acting within the capitalist system. Without this struggle, without this total victory over the opportunism in the workers' movement, there will be no question of the dictatorship of the proletariat" (our translation).