

LEARNING FROM OUR ENEMIES.

The Ad hoc committee on August 13th was completely disrupted - no meeting took place, due to the behavior of members of the B.V.S.F.

While this incident is not in itself very important, it may be helpful to understand it politically, rather than analysing it in terms of their superficial (sociological) behavior- which was to shout and interrupt till everyone got fed up and the meeting broke up.

The same tactics were employed and the same rupture occurred at the foundation of the V.S.C., and at an early stage in the July 21st Ad hoc Committee. But many left meetings are similarly, though not as violently, marred by a lack of communication and extravagant emotion, and it is necessary to try and see why.

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS.

After the chairman and minute secretary had been appointed a provisional agenda was read out. The B.V.S.F. immediately challenged this and asked for a discussion on the slogans of the demonstration. As the first ad-hoc committee had already had a full discussion on these slogans and agreed them, and further invitations, e.g. to this meeting, were sent out on the basis of these slogans, this was a pointless, and dishonest appeal. If the B.V.S.F. did not agree with the slogans they should not have come. If anyone, at any stage in the campaign can challenge a previous decision, absolutely no progress will ever be made.

To do so implies a contempt for the part of those intervening for the feelings, wishes, and work of the other people present - as though anything they had decided had to be subject to approval by the B.V.S.F. This also is manifest in their behavior, the rudeness, interrupting and shouting. Manners, in a political meeting mean respect for the meeting as a whole, and a willingness not to impose one's own views. They are thus not a bourgeois value, but very much a socialist one.

The absence of manners, and the violent intervention, shows extreme egotism, and the insistence that unity means accepting all their slogans, that is their control, is again the extreme individualism of bourgeois society.

After the main body of the meeting, about 80, had left their group of 15 or so, plus 12 others remained. They then decided to set up their own committee and demonstration and offer to join with the rest of us only if we agreed to all their slogans (a long and incoherent list) and to give them parity in controlling the organisation.

MARXISM- LENINISM IS A MAGIC FORMULA

Further to use the slogans as a test of politics is a childish fetishism that words can substitute for political activity. The politics of the campaign depends on the general line - of solidarity- and the work for it, participation by people, political discussion, local activity. To reduce this to a slogan is the kind of mindlessness which right-wing critics use to make fun of the left. It can only be engaged in by people whose only political activity is confined to meetings - and that largely to their own sect. And in fact B.V.S.F. cannot organise or work outside a talk - they have no base, and their activities are parasitic on the wider movement.

However, their bad tactics - which obviously antagonise ordinary people, are not just foolish. They are consistent with their overall strategy.

Although not a coherent group being made up of even timier groups which quarrel and split, the B.V.S.F. ARE 'Maoist' that is they claim to follow the general line of the C.P.C. and to be 'anti-revisionist' communists. (They by no means represent all the people, organised, or not with a 'Maoist' approach.) Their concept of the way forward to the

Revolution is the building of a Party- themselves- which has the right theory and programme, and which fights to have this accepted by the movement of which it is the vanguard. Ideological agreement must come first, for if the movement is to be successful it must work on the basis of correct theory, which they understandably feel to be their own. The main danger to this winning of a vanguard role is other revolutionary groups with a different analysis who are also competing for leadership. Only if these are defeated and destroyed can success be achieved, for other leaderships, or any ambiguity, variety of positions etc can only confuse and lead to defeat of the movement. For this reason too, ideological work - ie. the politics of talking, has primacy for it is necessary to have agreement on theory before undertaking united action, verbal discussions are primary and all important.

Thus 'unity about a principle' must be total unity. There cannot therefore really be an ad-hoc basis for work, since the other political views have to be defeated if the movement is to succeed. The open meetings can only be used to have this conflict out in the open, not to engage in joint work.

OUR STRATEGY.

We believe on the contrary that the Party cannot apply itself in advance as a leadership. A leadership has to be created in the struggle, by proving itself in action. No one trend or sect has a monopoly of virtues, we have to learn from each other; We can only learn by doing things together, and then discussing frankly and honestly and with the maximum attempt to try and understand each other, what we have achieved.

An ad-hoc committee is thus a useful framework for developing a genuine dialogue, based on a willingness to work for a common end, though this may be interpreted in different ways. It is implicit in this that people can and do change, but only on the basis of work, not by argument. As the movement grows, and succeeds, it will create a revolutionary theory, a leadership and a Party which is intimately fused with the broader rank and file and the people as a whole, and not imposed on it from above.

WE SHALL FIGHT WE SHALL WIN.

It is in our view, not yet clear to V.S.C. that it has a responsibility to be this (or one of these) movements. Unless it develops this clarity, we shall fail to free the movement from the danger of disruptive groups, and we shall fail to overcome our own individualism, egotism, and false consciousness. For if we as groups or sects within V.S.C. also believe that the vanguard applies itself on the basis of believing it has a correct theory, instead of trying to work out with V.S.C. as a whole what we ought to be doing, we too will fail to overcome our competitiveness, a competitiveness characteristic of bourgeois society and which can only be overcome consciously.

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