

with all his heart and soul, in the struggle of his people for national salvation, as the key and the condition to all future advance. Any person who stands aloof from this struggle, who confines himself to preaching generalisations about socialism, is not a Marxist at all but a mere parlour-socialist. The fact that a man is a Communist makes him not worse but a better fighter for the freedom of his people from national oppression.

Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, is not an abstract dogma, but a living historical science, which enjoins upon all its supporters to study the concrete historical situation in which they find themselves. In conditions of national oppression, of colonial domination, and racial discrimination, the first duty of every Communist is to fight unconditionally and unreservedly for a complete emancipation from all forms of domination and oppression, for the building of a united front of national liberation. Such a united front should consist not only of workers and peasants, but also of patriotic intellectuals, professional people, and even large sections of the capitalist class who are opposed to the oppression of their people. Working unselfishly and wholeheartedly to maintain and extend the strength and unity of such a national liberation movement, the Communists do so not only because it is the condition and the key to the future advance of socialism, but also because as sons of the toiling masses, they understand the burning needs of the people for national dignity, equality and freedom." (Quoted from article by N. Numade in "The African Communist", issued by the S.A. Communist Party, No. 2, April 1960.)

*Who leads the united front? Not abstractly but concretely!*

*Use the objective conditions in S.A. Suitable for a national movement that after 'liberation' pursue a 'capitalist road for S.A.' or 'a working-class road' i.e. a Socialist road? I fear behind the latter!!*

We make no excuse for reproducing this lengthy extract from the outstanding article by Comrade Numade, the whole of which, indeed, would repay serious study by supporters of the "Socialist League of Africa." In a clear and concise manner, it has formulated precisely the point at issue between real Marxists and the dogmatic, abstract theorists exemplified by the "Stay-at-Home" document.

The document demonstrates that the writer neither understands nor believes in the united front of national liberation. He thinks that Communists "sully" themselves by identifying themselves with the people's cause; with the Congress movement and the Freedom Charter. He thinks it beneath the dignity of a socialist to take part in a broad nationalist-democratic movement for freedom. He wants "pure" socialism.

*Correct*

But actually by his sectarian and intemperate slanders against the freedom movement and its devoted and respected leaders, no less than by the false picture he presents of "socialists" as people who standing aside from the real mass movement preach high-sounding abstractions and homilies, the author of "Stay-at-Home" discredits the very principles for which he claims to stand.

/ FALSE ...

FALSE CONCLUSIONS.

Having devoted the bulk of his thesis to the travesty of history which we have dealt with above, the author of "Stay-at-Home" spends a few pages "analysing" the March and April crisis, and drawing conclusions. He heads this concluding section: "Why Did We Fail?".

According to him, "we" should not have started the anti-pass campaign at all. "We would not have hoped to succeed in a campaign to remove the passes at this stage" ... "No organisation was prepared for a full-scale attack on the Government .. on the pass issue." "We must choose our timing and methods more carefully in the future."

It is difficult to pick one's way through this tissue of half-truths and misconceptions.

Firstly, no-one except perhaps the more naive of the PAC leaders, who are relative novices in politics, really expected to see the pass laws removed in one fell swoop as a result of the March demonstrations. The ANC has been fighting against pass laws since 1912, and will go on doing so until these laws have been abolished. It is only too well aware how deeply these evil laws are interwoven with the whole fabric of colonial domination in this country.

needs  
clarifying

Secondly, the "full-scale attack" on the Government was not "chosen" to take place at the time and in the manner that it did. The major strikes, protest marches and demonstrations which took place were largely the result of the wave of indignation which spread through the country following the savage police massacres at Sharpeville, Langa and elsewhere.

Thirdly, the people's mass actions of March and April were not a failure. True, the Verwoerd regime is still in office, and it has taken a grim revenge on the masses and their leaders. To the petty bourgeois philistine, this may seem evidence of defeat, and he moans: "We should not have started the fight ... Look, now, we have lost ... We must be more careful next time... We must change our banners and our slogans."

But, viewed in the light of historical materialism, in their immediate and their long term effects, the splendid workers' struggles of March and April were great and historic victories for the South African democracy. They evoked a world response of sympathy and solidarity whose effects have a direct influence and bearing on this country -- e.g. the Security Council resolution, the reinvigorated boycott movement by African and Asian countries and by workers' movements in many lands.

They shook the Government and the ruling classes to the core, accentuated their inner contradictions, and revealed the basic instability and weaknesses of White domination, whereas the democratic movement has gained much in solidarity, maturity and confidence.

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But the author of "Stay-at-Home" cannot see all this. For him the anti-pass struggle has been an unmitigated failure. The recommendations which he draws from this melancholy conclusion, are equally lame and wide of the mark.

Good

/ "The .....

"The trade unions must organise the industrial worker and the strike weapon must be used to secure higher wages and better living conditions. Industrial action must be centred on the factories rather than the townships - as distinct from the National Liberatory Movement itself, which has its base in the townships."

Of course the workers "must" organise themselves in trade unions - it is in their vital interests to do so. And it is inevitable that, from time to time, these unions, faced with obdurate bosses, will resort to strike action in the various industries, despite the formidable array of laws and police measures which are meant to deter strikes of Africans. They will enjoy the fullest support of every socialist and democrat in such strikes.

But "Stay-at-Home" advocates trade union economic strikes as an alternative to the political general strike.

"Its main use (the strike) is in the field of economic struggle. Its use as a political weapon is very much more difficult and must be reserved for special periods."

Now this is both untrue and defeatist, and well illustrates the danger of applying general, predetermined concepts of "methods of struggle" in an abstract way, without studying concretely the conditions. "In general", in most countries, it is true that it is "very much more difficult" to organise political than economic strikes. But it just isn't true in South Africa at the present time, when the organisation of an economic strike by African workers in any industry has proved time and again to be a most formidable undertaking, risking wholesale victimisation; whereas workers have demonstrated year after year, that they will respond to a timely call by the liberation movement for a general political strike. It is particularly absurd to make such a statement immediately after the great general political strikes in Cape Town and elsewhere earlier this year.

It is also defeatist, because the general political strike is a more advanced type of workers' action, demanding a higher level of political consciousness.

Economic strikes by workers, strikes for higher wages and better conditions, are of immense importance; not only because they answer the immediate needs of the working class, under their present conditions of gross exploitation and underpayment, but also because they raise the whole level of class consciousness. But, like all other forms of trade union activity, it is exceptionally difficult for African workers to organise successfully for strikes because of their political status as colonial-type workers, because the whole police-state machinery is mobilised against them. That is precisely why the African workers, particularly the most advanced and conscious section among them, readily understand the need for political action by the trade union movement, for the close association and alliance of the trade unions with the militant political alliance.

Trade union strikes and other struggles arise spontaneously all the time in capitalist society. Every socialist has a primary duty to assist and support the workers in these struggles. But in seeking to elevate such struggles above the political battles of the whole class, the whole people, the "Socialist League" is merely reproducing the "fundamental error" which Lenin so tellingly exposed, more than half a century ago in "What is To be Done?"

"...making the economic struggle the exclusive, or at least the main starting point... the exclusive or at least the main basis. Such a view is radically wrong."

As a result of many years of patient, hard organisational and educational work by the ANC, the trade unions and the Communist Party, and inspired by the perspectives of African liberation in this splendid era for our continent, the African proletariat in the main centres of the Union have shown that they have the high political and national consciousness, the solidarity and enthusiasm, to come out again and again on mass political strikes.

And "Stay-at-Home" wants to drag them back from this high level of action by offering as an alternative purely local and economic strikes. Despite all his learned display of socialist phrases, his talk of the need of the workers "to be organised in their own party", the writer of "Stay-at-Home" reveals himself here to be a tame reformist lagging in political understanding far behind the ordinary unlettered African workers of the Rand, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Durban. Certainly the workers need, and are organising, their own independent class party: The Communist Party, but the Party would lag behind the workers if it advised them to subordinate political to economic demands. } Good.

#### The Liberation Movement.

"Stay-at-Home" has the future of the struggle in South Africa all cut-and-dried. After the "failures" of March and April, the workers must concentrate on economic and trade union struggles and put the general strike into cold storage for better days.

What about the Congress movement, which for so long, so devotedly and so ably has led the freedom struggle in South Africa? Clearly, the Socialist League of Africa does not think much of the ANC and its partners - they are much kinder to PAC - and one would think, after all the nasty things they have had to say about Congress that perhaps the best thing this unfortunate organisation can do is to buckle down to the Government's ban and disappear.

But, not after all, "Stay-at-Home" permits the "National Liberatory Movement" (ANC or PAC?) some sort of role in its future scheme of things:

"Industrial action must be centred on the factories rather than the townships - as distinct from the National Liberatory Movement itself, which must have its base in the townships... A close co-ordination of the two movements can lead the township organisation into support of any future industrial action either by picketing or by introducing subsidiary campaigns, such as boycott action against factory produce, etc."

/ Thus ...

Thus the ANC (now demoted to be a "township organisation") is, according to the Socialist League of Africa, to be relegated to a sort of auxillary organisation to back up trade union strikes by picketing (since when do workers' unions need outside bodies to do their picketing for them?) and "subsidiary campaigns".

What sort of dream-world do these people live in?

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Here we have the African National Congress, premier organisation of the African people and senior partner in the liberation alliance, whose leaders and members have stubbornly defied every effort to destroy it, and who may well soon be occupying the Union Buildings instead of the Pretoria jail -- after all this is Africa, 1960, and stranger things have happened. And the "theoretician" of "Stay-at-Home" is advising them to hang around for future trade unions to organise strikes -- "against the employers first and at a later stage against the entire state machinery" -- so they can picket and "introduce subsidiary campaigns."

Could shallow little-mindedness, masquerading as "socialism", go any further?

What is the "Socialist League of Africa"?

We do not imagine the "Socialist League of Africa" is as important as its rather pretentious name might lead the unsuspecting reader to suppose. However, the point is not the size but the tendency and direction of any organisation. If the document is to be taken as a guide, the S.K.A. is nothing really new in our experience.

We have come across this sort of thing before. This sort of group -- r-r-revolutionary and Ultra-Left in words; disruptive, malicious and treacherous in deed -- is a sickeningly familiar phenomenon in workers' and democratic movements in South Africa and throughout the world.

omit!!  
We saw it in the Soviet Union, when the Trotsky-Zinoviev group - in the name of World Revolution - went all out to sabotage the practical construction of socialism.

We saw it in Spain, when the POUM ("Party of Marxist Unification") started a revolt in Barcelona against the Republic, while Franco was marching on Madrid - on the grounds that the United Front Government wasn't introducing socialism.

We have seen similar groups at work in this country. They wrecked the All-African Convention and the A.P.O. Under their ill-starred leadership the so-called "Unity Movement" has effectively deprived the Coloured masses of the Cape of any say in the political developments of the past decade; isolated them from each and every struggle of the African and Indian masses; and now edifies them with the spectacle of four or five warring groups of Trotskyites fighting over the leadership of the "NEUM" - which itself has dwindled to a shadow.

It is an old story.

Way back, a hundred years ago, in the days of the First International, a group of middle-class intellectuals, led by Bakunin, tried to wreck the organisation - Marx and Engels weren't revolutionary enough for them! Lenin knew them well - they plagued him all his life. He described them in masterly fashion in his pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism - an Infantile Disorder".

"Bolshevism", he wrote, "grew, took shape, and became hardened in long years of struggle against petty-bourgeois revolutionaries which snacks of, or borrows something from anarchism and which in all essentials falls short of the conditions and requirements of the sustained proletarian class struggle." He wrote of "the instability of such revolutionaries, its barrenness, its liability to become swiftly transformed into submission, apathy, something fantastic..."

What grounds have we for putting the "Socialist League of Africa" into this category?

Their pamphlet bears all the hall-marks.

It is scurrilous: lavish in its denunciations of Communists and other honest workers' and democratic leaders as traitors, careerists, etc., unscrupulously distorting facts.

It is dogmatic: barren of all creative thought based on a concrete study of the conditions, the times and the world we live in; drawing all its negative conclusions from pedantry, and phrase-mongering.

#### THE "NEUE ZEIT" TEXT.

Nowhere in this lengthy essay on tactics is the slightest attempt made to place the South African freedom struggle in its context --against the world background of our epoch of world events, the advance to socialism of one-third of humanity, the struggle for peace; the dynamic march of whole continents to national emancipation; the African revolution. Yet these tremendous events are inseparably connected and interwoven with the shape and the tactics of the struggle in South Africa.

Instead the starting point is a long quotation "from the German Socialist paper Neue Zeit." The date and the author are not given, and we are not familiar with it. But the text is remarkable first for its exceptionally puffed-up and abstract tone, and secondly by its utter irrelevancy to present-day South African realities. It reads very much as if it comes from the period before the first world war, when the anarchists in the international labour movement were arguing that the general strike was the one and only effective road to socialism, and their opponents were responding, just as dogmatically, that it was no good at all. The whole arid and scholastic debate, which plagued the socialist movement for decades, has long been resolved in practice by the experience of three Russian revolutions and a good many other victorious revolutionary struggles for socialism and national liberation in the epoch of imperialism. Marxists no longer indulge in sterile polemics whether this or that "method of a struggle" is the "ideal" one, the "Panacea" -- irrespective of the context of time and place, of circumstances and concrete conditions. We have learnt that the complex, drawn-out struggle against international imperialism and reaction involves manysided and flexible tactics and methods of struggle, legal and illegal, peaceful and sanguinary, ranging from local meetings, boycotts, strikes,

a "notably" quotation

demonstrations, etc., to national and international campaigns involving every sort of organised resistance which has been evolved in generations of class conflict.

In these struggles, experience in many countries has proved the political general strike to be not "the one and only panacea" as the Bakuninists imagined it but, combined with other forms of struggle, to be an invaluable weapon in the hands of the masses of the people in their fight against imperialism, for democracy, peace and socialism.

The Neue Zeit article, the general strike is "only" a means of organising the workers; "only" important as the beginning of an uprising against capitalism. It "cannot solve the problem" because "it tires the worker sooner than it does the enemy". And the workers "cannot even think of winning" unless "part of the army" is won over. Finally, it does not only organise the workers, but also the capitalists, and "shows how much blood the state is prepared to shed in order to keep its power."

The whole extract chosen by the "Socialist League of Africa" is indeed an excellent example of dogmatism and the use of Left phrases to mask a policy of defeatism. Anyone who was guided by such ideas would never call a general strike; he would have to work out whether it was really the beginning of a socialist revolution (otherwise no strike); whether it would "win over part of the army" (otherwise no strike - and can you imagine "part of the army" in present-day South Africa siding with the African workers?); whether it might not "organise the capitalists" more than the workers, and whether the state might not spill too much blood. And finally you would be faced with the fact that it would tire the workers more than the enemy.

One could hardly imagine any text more out-of-place and more out-of-date for South Africa, where, over the past decade, a series of inspiring general political strikes have played an incalculably important part in deepening the class and political understanding of the masses, building unity and solidarity, preparing the workers and peasants for further struggles, and isolating and discrediting the South African ruling class at home and throughout the world.

It is characteristic of this document that it should start with such a text; one shudders to think of the sort of "socialists" who will be produced by the school of the "Socialist League of Africa." "There has been endless confusion in the ranks of the liberation movement," they write. The description might be better applied to themselves.

#### Under False Colours.

South Africa in 1960 is not the same as this country a decade ago. The time is past when it was possible for such gentlemen as the "Unity Movement" to launch out openly against the A.N.C. and the Communist Party - and still gain some measure of support among class-conscious workers and revolutionary intellectuals.

The "S.L.A." is an attempt to play the old game in a new way, to sail under false colours. The old anti-Congress line is given a new look, dressed up as "friendly" criticism from "also-Congressites." The old anti-Congress line is concealed under the guise of attacking "a group who profess to be Marxists."

The "new-look" Trotskyites appear as respectable "Marxists" and "socialists"; their former idol never mentioned and his works hidden away only to be shown to inner-circle initiates in a back room.

Will these new tactics succeed?

/ Maybe, .....

correct!

Maybe for a time they will. Disgruntled Congressites and ex-Communists, angered by real or imaginary grievances and shortcomings, may seek and find a home in the "Socialist League of Africa". Ardent revolutionary students, sickened by the horrors of "White South Africa" and lacking knowledge and experience of socialism and the democratic struggle, may be drawn towards the "Socialist League", in the belief that it answers their needs for militant action and Communist theory.

But the "success", we are sure, will be short-lived.

The struggle in our country is too acute and searching for any movement founded on evasions, half-truths and deceit, to last for very long.

It is a pity we had to spend so much time and trouble dealing with the statement of the "Socialist League of Africa". But if in the course of analysing their pamphlet we have helped to bring some clarity to those who may have been confused by it, we shall consider it time well spent.

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