

HUNGARY AND SOUTH AFRICA.

: Lessons for the Workers. :

The recent events in Hungary are of importance to the working-class of all countries, both capitalist and socialist.

Already, workers in Hungary, China, Britain and many other lands are seriously examining these events to discover what lessons can be learnt which will assist the cause of the working-class in their own countries. The linking of the generalised experience emanating from the Hungarian situation with the concrete practice of the working-class movement in various countries, will ensure great forward strides of the working-class movement in the countries concerned.

In South Africa by drawing the correct lessons from the mistakes of our Hungarian fellow-workers, and applying these lessons in the actual concrete practice of our own struggle we may help overcome the symptoms of "inertia or paralysis", "apathy and delay" to which M. Kotane pointed in a recent "Review of Current Affairs" (New Age 29/11/56). In this way we can also ensure that mistakes which at present appear small, do not develop into large ones which will cause great losses to the cause of South African workers.

One aspect of the Hungarian experience vitally concerns us here : namely the internal situation in Hungary which led to the subsequent tragic events.

Comrade Janos Kadar, head of the new Workers' and Peasants' Government has given three causes of the Hungarian situation:

"The first is the shortcomings that actually existed in the methods of the leadership of the party and government -- methods which seriously affected their bonds with the masses.

"The second cause is that while it was correct to see shortcomings, the way in which they were criticised was bad.

For example, people inside the party who saw the shortcomings most clearly were wrong in carrying on the discussion outside the party.....

"The third cause was that the counter-revolution, encouraged by certain imperialist circles, chose the most opportune moment and made use of the whole movement for its own ends.

These three causes were noticeable throughout the course of events, and in the different groups of people who took part in them. "

(reported New Age 29/11/56)

The second and third causes are readily discernible, and do not cause great theoretical difficulty.

The problem of major mistakes committed by a bureaucratic Party and Government leadership divorced from the masses of the people, was not immediately corrected even after the first demonstrations of October 23rd and resulted in great bloodshed and suffering later. According to C.Coutts, an eye-witness of the Budapest events, these mistakes would never have happened "if the Party leaders had been united in themselves and not separated from the mass of their members and the people. He states further that it was the shattering of the communist leadership and "the fact that the working people had no organised leadership" which was the direct cause of confusion and the near success of counter-revolution.

In South Africa weaknesses in the national liberatory organisations, bureaucracy, "routine methods" etc. are directly linked with weaknesses in the leadership of the working class. Backwardness in working class leadership results from being divorced from the people, divorced from the actual struggle of the workers and peasants. It has led to a failure to instil class consciousness in the workers and peasants, inability to develop working-class ideology, and lack of propagation of this ideology amongst the masses of workers and peasants. This in its turn seriously impairs and brings into doubt the success of the struggle for national liberation.

Why do we give such prominence to the working class which after all, is but one of the many classes seeking national liberation based on the Freedom Charter ?

In Poland the workers' leader W.Gomulka discussing recent events in his own country said:

"The key to the solution of these great difficulties is in the hands of the working class. Everything, both the present day and the future prospects, depends on its attitude. And the attitude of the working class depends on the policy of the party as mapped out by its leadership"

(New Age 29/11/56)

In South Africa the working class also holds the key to the rapid solution of our difficulties. The workers, the most far-seeing class in modern society, desire socialism. This they can only achieve by organising themselves and uniting

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with all other democratic classes, principally the peasantry, in accomplishing the national liberatory struggle for a system of government founded on the principles of the Freedom Charter. Only an advanced working class leadership which correctly understands the links between these two great struggles for national liberation and socialism can fulfill the historic tasks of the present.

The South African working class is a living and growing force. It is not a decaying class as is the peasantry -- which is daily broken up, impoverished and diminished as G.Mbeki has shown in his recent series on the Transkei. Nor do the workers seek to become exploiters of others, to raise themselves into a yet higher social stratum above the mass of toilers, as do the tradesmen, small businessmen and richer peasants and headmen, who seek not to end exploitation, but by ending the colour bar to increase their own opportunities for exploiting others.

The workers can only emancipate themselves finally from exploitation, by ending all exploitation and establishing a classless society.

It is because the working class is historically destined to achieve this task that only it is capable of successfully leading the struggle for national liberation --- which for it is but the first stage of a whole radical alteration of the social relations of production.

So, working-class leaders must instil a class consciousness amongst the workers and also among the peasantry, so that these classes in firm alliance may "stand on their own feet". Failure to do precisely this led to serious mistakes and setbacks in Hungary.

But many say : to instil class consciousness among the workers and peasants will harm the national liberatory struggle, antagonise friendly classes and isolate the workers from other elements in the oppressed national groups. In this connection what can we learn from the experience of other countries ?

In China in achieving land reform which was a task of the Peoples' Democratic revolution, the method adopted by the Chinese working-class leadership was to patiently over a period of years, instil a class consciousness among the peasants. Land was never "conferred" on the peasants. They were made politically class conscious. They were assisted to "stand on their own feet", they had to achieve land reform through their own strength.

The development of working class consciousness does not harm the national liberatory struggle. On the contrary it is an absolute essential for the successful development of this struggle. The working class and national struggles go hand in hand. At one and the same time the workers both struggle with other classes, particularly capitalist elements, desiring liberation, and must co-operate intimately with them. In this simultaneous struggle and close co-operation between opposing class interests, true unity for the defeat of the common enemy, Nationalist autocracy, and for the establishment of Peoples' Democracy may be achieved.

Only by making the peasants stand on their own feet can this great force constituting the majority of ~~the~~ our population be drawn into the struggle for liberation.

Only by developing class consciousness amongst the workers can the leadership of this class in the national liberatory struggle be achieved.

Hand in hand with the tasks of developing class consciousness is the task of developing working class ideology.

As long as there are classes in society there will be ideological differences? It is particularly important to remember this in view of the complex national struggle also taking place in South Africa. In order that the national struggle may be successfully resolved, and the way opened for further advance by the working class, it is absolutely essential that the workers seek to obviate petty-bourgeois and middle class intellectual influences on their way of thinking. The constant pressures of the ideologies of the non working class allies of the workers in the national struggle has to be resisted and overcome. Failure to do this impairs the strength and ultimate success of the workers.

Besides this there are also weaknesses of ideological understanding. Working class leaders must encourage and participate in study by knowing truth from facts, by summing up the rich experience of strikes, political and economic action by workers, peasant struggles, national struggles such as the Defiance campaign and the Congress of the People. They must absorb all there is to be learnt from other countries. Above all, there can be no advance unless these leaders have close indestructible links with the masses. They must know intimately the conditions, feelings and reactions not only of the workers and peasants but of all classes.

These fundamental tasks begun , the remaining problem ~~prese~~ presents itself : what has been learnt by the leaders must again be taken back to the masses. It must be propagated . Class consciousness and working class ideology must be widely disseminated and tested against the living practice of the peoples' struggle.

Learning these lessons from the workers of other lands and integrating them with the rich experience of our ~~ix~~ own movement South African workers may take giant steps forward in the struggle for Peoples' Democracy, and socialism .

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December 1956.

Collection Number: A3393

Collection Name: Bob Hepple Papers

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

Location: Johannesburg

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